



GCE AS MARKING SCHEME

SUMMER 2025

**RELIGIOUS STUDIES - UNIT 1
OPTION F: AN INTRODUCTION TO SIKHISM**

2120UF0-1

About this marking scheme

The purpose of this marking scheme is to provide teachers, learners, and other interested parties, with an understanding of the assessment criteria used to assess this specific assessment.

This marking scheme reflects the criteria by which this assessment was marked in a live series and was finalised following detailed discussion at an examiners' conference. A team of qualified examiners were trained specifically in the application of this marking scheme. The aim of the conference was to ensure that the marking scheme was interpreted and applied in the same way by all examiners. It may not be possible, or appropriate, to capture every variation that a candidate may present in their responses within this marking scheme. However, during the training conference, examiners were guided in using their professional judgement to credit alternative valid responses as instructed by the document, and through reviewing exemplar responses.

Without the benefit of participation in the examiners' conference, teachers, learners and other users, may have different views on certain matters of detail or interpretation. Therefore, it is strongly recommended that this marking scheme is used alongside other guidance, such as published exemplar materials or Guidance for Teaching. This marking scheme is final and will not be changed, unless in the event that a clear error is identified, as it reflects the criteria used to assess candidate responses during the live series.

Marking guidance for examiners, please apply carefully and consistently:

Positive marking

It should be remembered that candidates are writing under examination conditions and credit should be given for what the candidate writes, rather than adopting the approach of penalising him/her for any omissions. It should be possible for a very good response to achieve full marks and a very poor one to achieve zero marks. Marks should not be deducted for a less than perfect answer if it satisfies the criteria of the mark scheme. Exemplars in the mark scheme are only meant as helpful guides. Therefore, any other acceptable or suitable answers should be credited even though they are not actually stated in the mark scheme.

Two main phrases are deliberately placed throughout each mark scheme to remind examiners of this philosophy. They are:

- “Candidates could include some or all of the following, but other relevant points should be credited.”
- “This is not a checklist, please remember to credit any valid alternatives.”

Rules for marking

1. Differentiation will be achieved on the basis of candidates' response.
2. No mark scheme can ever anticipate or include every possible detail or interpretation; examiners should use their professional judgement to decide whether a candidate's particular response answers the question in relation to the particular assessment objective.
3. Candidates will often express their ideas in language different from that given in any mark scheme or outline. Positive marking therefore, on the part of examiners, will recognise and credit correct statements of ideas, valid points and reasoned arguments irrespective of the language employed.

Banded mark schemes

Banded mark schemes are divided so that each band has a relevant descriptor. The descriptor provides a description of the performance level for that band. Each band contains marks. Examiners should first read and annotate a candidate's answer to pick out the evidence that is being assessed in that question. Once the annotation is complete, the mark scheme can be applied. This is done as a two-stage process.

Banded mark schemes stage 1 – deciding on the band

When deciding on a band, the answer should be viewed holistically. Beginning at the lowest band, examiners should look at the candidate's answer and check whether it matches the descriptor for that band. Examiners should look at the descriptor for that band and see if it matches the qualities shown in the candidate's answer. If the descriptor at the lowest band is satisfied, examiners should move up to the next band and repeat this process for each band until the descriptor matches the answer.

If an answer covers different aspects of different bands within the mark scheme, a 'best fit' approach should be adopted to decide on the band and then the candidate's response should be used to decide on the mark within the band. For instance, if a response is mainly in band 2 but with a limited amount of band 3 content, the answer would be placed in band 2, but the mark awarded would be close to the top of band 2 as a result of the band 3 content.

Banded mark schemes stage 2 – deciding on the mark

Once the band has been decided, examiners can then assign a mark. During standardising (at the Examiners' marking conference), detailed advice from the Principal Examiner on the qualities of each mark band will be given. Examiners will then receive examples of answers in each mark band that have been awarded a mark by the Principal Examiner. Examiners should mark the examples and compare their marks with those of the Principal Examiner. When marking, examiners can use these examples to decide whether a candidate's response is of a superior, inferior or comparable standard to the example. Examiners are reminded of the need to revisit the answer as they apply the mark scheme in order to confirm that the band and the mark allocated is appropriate to the response provided. Indicative content is also provided for banded mark schemes. Indicative content is not exhaustive, and any other valid points must be credited. In order to reach the highest bands of the mark scheme a learner need not cover all of the points mentioned in the indicative content, but must meet the requirements of the highest mark band.

Awarding no marks to a response

Where a response is not creditworthy, that is it contains nothing of any relevance to the question, or where no response has been provided, no marks should be awarded.

AS Generic Band Descriptors

Band	Assessment Objective AO1 – Part (a) questions [15 marks] <i>Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of religion and belief, including:</i> - <i>religious, philosophical and/or ethical thought and teaching</i> - <i>influence of beliefs, teachings and practices on individuals, communities and societies</i> - <i>cause and significance of similarities and differences in belief, teaching and practice</i> - <i>approaches to the study of religion and belief.</i>
5	13-15 marks • Thorough, accurate and relevant knowledge and understanding of religion and belief. • An extensive and relevant response which answers the specific demands of the question set. • The response shows an excellent standard of coherence, clarity and organisation. • The response demonstrates extensive depth and/or breadth. Excellent use of evidence and examples. • Thorough and accurate reference made to sacred texts and sources of wisdom, where appropriate. • Thorough and accurate use of specialist language /vocabulary in context. • Excellent spelling, punctuation and grammar.
4	10-12 marks • Accurate and relevant knowledge and understanding of religion and belief. • A detailed, relevant response which answers the specific demands of the question set. • The response shows a very good standard of coherence, clarity and organisation. • The response demonstrates depth and/or breadth. Good use of evidence and examples. • Accurate reference made to sacred texts and sources of wisdom, where appropriate. • Accurate use of specialist language and vocabulary in context. • Very good spelling, punctuation and grammar.
3	7-9 marks • Mainly accurate and relevant knowledge and understanding of religion and belief. • A satisfactory response, which generally answers the main demands of the question set. • The response shows a satisfactory standard of coherence, clarity and organisation. • The response demonstrates depth and/or breadth in some areas. Satisfactory use of evidence and examples. • Mainly accurate reference made to sacred texts and sources of wisdom, where appropriate. • Mainly accurate use of specialist language and vocabulary in context. • Satisfactory spelling, punctuation and grammar.
2	4-6 marks • Limited knowledge and understanding of religion and belief. Basic level of accuracy and relevance. • A basic response, addressing some of the demands of the question set. • Partially accurate response, with some signs of coherence, clarity and organisation. • The response demonstrates limited depth and/or breadth, including limited use of evidence and examples. • Some accurate reference made to sacred texts and sources of wisdom, where appropriate. • Some accurate use of specialist language and vocabulary in context. • Some minor, recurring errors in spelling, punctuation and grammar.
1	1-3 marks • Very limited knowledge and understanding of religion and belief. Low level of accuracy and relevance. • A very limited response, with little attempt to address the question. • Very limited accuracy within the response, with little coherence, clarity and organisation. • The response demonstrates very limited depth and/or breadth. Very limited use of evidence and examples. • Little or no reference made to sacred texts and sources of wisdom, where appropriate. • Some grasp of basic specialist language and vocabulary • Errors in spelling, punctuation and grammar affect the meaning and clarity of communication. N.B. A maximum of 1 mark should be awarded for a response that only demonstrates 'knowledge in isolation'
0	• No relevant information.

Band	Assessment Objective AO2- Part (b) questions [15 marks] <i>Analyse and evaluate aspects of, and approaches to, religion and belief, including their significance, influence and study.</i>
5	13-15 marks • Confident critical analysis and perceptive evaluation of the issue. • A response that successfully identifies and thoroughly addresses the issues raised by the question set. • The response shows an excellent standard of coherence, clarity and organisation. • Thorough, sustained and clear views are given, supported by extensive, detailed reasoning and/or evidence. • Thorough and accurate use of specialist language and vocabulary in context. • Excellent spelling, punctuation and grammar.
4	10-12 marks • Purposeful analysis and effective evaluation of the issue. • The main issues raised by the question are identified successfully and addressed. • The response shows a very good standard of coherence, clarity and organisation. • The views given are clearly supported by detailed reasoning and/or evidence. • Accurate use of specialist language and vocabulary in context. • Very good spelling, punctuation and grammar.
3	7-9 marks • Satisfactory analysis and relevant evaluation of the issue. • Most of the issues raised by the question are identified successfully and have generally been addressed. • The response shows a satisfactory standard of coherence, clarity and organisation. • Most of the views given are satisfactorily supported by reasoning and/or evidence. • Mainly accurate use of specialist language and vocabulary in context. • Satisfactory spelling, punctuation and grammar.
2	4-6 marks • Some valid analysis and inconsistent evaluation of the issue. • A limited number of issues raised by the question set are identified and partially addressed. • Partially accurate response, with some signs of coherence, clarity and organisation. • A basic attempt to justify the views given, but they are only partially supported with reason and/or evidence. • Some accurate use of specialist language and vocabulary in context. • Some minor, recurring errors in spelling, punctuation and grammar.
1	1-3 marks • A basic analysis and limited evaluation of the issue. • Very limited accuracy within the response, with little coherence, clarity and organisation. • An attempt has been made to identify and address the issues raised by the question set. • Little attempt to justify a view with reasoning or evidence. • Some grasp of basic specialist language and vocabulary. • Errors in spelling, punctuation and grammar affect the meaning and clarity of communication.
0	• No relevant analysis or evaluation.

GCE AS RELIGIOUS STUDIES – UNIT 1
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To be read in conjunction with the generic level descriptors provided.

Section A

1. (a) **Explain the rules of the Khalsa in relation to the general Sikh principle of Dharam Yudh.** [15]

Candidates could include some of the following, but other relevant responses should be credited.

- Sikhs suffered throughout their early history from oppression, injustice and persecution from Mughul rulers. These experiences and the need to defend and protect the religion, its beliefs and practices, have heavily influenced the development of the concept of Dharam Yudh.
- Guru Nanak insisted that tyranny and injustice must be resisted, and Guru Amar Das claimed that it was Sikh duty to establish an effective fence of justice. Without this the Sikh religion would not have survived. The concept from its beginning has emphasised two factors – resistance to tyranny and oppression, and justice. These are the factors which influence the specific teaching of the concept.
- The rules of war: the concept sets out specifically and clearly the conditions that are required for a conflict to be regarded as Dharam Yudh.
- Dharam Yudh is fought for spiritual and religious values and not for material gain.
- Soldiers must be committed Sikhs who conduct themselves according to Sikh standards. Those who take part must therefore abide by Sikh beliefs and values. The use of mercenaries is therefore not allowed. The aim of Dharam Yudh is the upholding of righteousness and justice and the injuring of innocents must be avoided.
- The concept is clearly expressed in the rules of the Khalsa as it sets standards of behaviour, which are clear and distinctive for Sikhs. Guru Gobind Singh founded the Khalsa at a time when Sikhs were suffering under the tyranny and oppression of Islamic Mughal rulers who sought to suppress all other faiths. In the face of this threat, he developed Sikhism as a religion with a strong identity which was prepared to defend its beliefs and principles.
- He instituted a new code of conduct for members of the Khalsa which reflect the principles of Dharam Yudh such as the wearing of the kirpan which signifies defence of the faith but never aggression towards others.
- Also, the Kara or the steel bracelet symbolises restraint from evil deeds. It is worn on the right wrist and reminds Sikhs of the vows taken, that is, they are servants of the Guru and should not do anything which may bring shame or disgrace. When they look at the Kara, they are made to think twice before doing anything evil with their hands.
- When dealing with enemies he encouraged Sikhs to practice diplomacy, employ a variety of tactics, and exhaust all techniques before engaging in warfare.
- Rules of the Khalsa also prohibit distinctions on caste, colour which can be causes of conflict and war.
- Sikhs are also urged to control the Five Evils - Lust, Anger, Greed, Material attachment and Ego. These are not just reasons for going to war.

This is not a checklist, please remember to credit any valid alternatives.

- (b) **‘There is no such thing as a just war.’**
Evaluate this view with reference to Sikhism.

[15]

Candidates could include some of the following, but other relevant responses should be credited.

- Religion usually promotes an avoidance of any kind of violent action. It represents the difference between spiritual and materialistic values. Religion stresses the importance of values such as love, compassion and mercy which are not compatible with violent actions which hurt or kill other people.
- A religious lifestyle also needs some distance from or renunciation of worldly affairs. It is in many ways the rejection of the materialistic. It can be argued that the use of force is part of the material not the spiritual world.
- The gentle qualities developed through Sikh values and practices such as equality, sewa and langar are impossible to combine with aggressive actions. They are in direct contradiction to each other.
- The concept of Dharam Yudh shows clearly that war can be justified. It is a Sikh duty to defend their religion and to uphold the truth. Guru Har Gobind thought that military action would sometimes be needed to promote the cause of justice.
- Guru Gobind Singh made it clear that military action was to be the last resort but emphasised that they should not be avoided if they proved necessary.
- The Sant Sipahi is an ideal combination of Sikh values and way of life. This concept clearly shows that the two can be combined in certain circumstances where there is no other choice to uphold righteousness and justice other than the use of force. Campaigning for a good cause and acting with vigour and courage for issues of human justice is a valid way for Sikhs to fulfil their beliefs. Sometimes the use of force is the only way this can be done effectively, and many Sikhs would see the use of force as being justified in this context.
- Many Sikhs throughout history have combined these two qualities very effectively.
- No modern tradition of absolute pacifism amongst Sikhs.

Overall, candidates should engage with the debate and come to a substantiated evaluation regarding the issue raised.

2. (a) Explain the concepts of:

- (i) Kirat Karo (earning money righteously and honestly) and**
 - (ii) Naam Japo (remembrance of God by repeating and focusing the mind on his name).**
- [15]**

Candidates could include some of the following, but other relevant responses should be credited.

Kirat Karo

- To work and earn one's living through hard work, to live a family way of life and practise truthfulness and honesty in all dealings. It creates a more caring and strong community.
- To carry out good deeds and earn an honest and pure livelihood by exercising God-given skills, abilities and talents for the benefit and improvement of the individual, family and society at large. This is a practical way of conquering the Five Evils.
- To work with determination and focus and not to be lazy and waste time.
- To do this work without personal gain but with the motivation of dedicating the work to God. This means that God is kept in mind at all times which relates to Naam Japo.
- This is earning a livelihood without deceit or cheating. Honest earning keeps the mind pure.
- It is strongly advocated to do work and earn an honest living, and as well not to be a burden on anyone or on the society.
- The Sikh faith rejects renunciation - detachment from home, family or work, and strongly advocates the householder's life.

Naam Japo

- This is remembrance of God by repeating and focusing the mind on his name and identity. This is the foundation on which the Sikh religion is built.
- The names given to God primarily refer to the attributes and qualities of God. The guideline in the Rahit Maryada of Guru Gobind Singh demands that Sikhs engage in Naam Simran as part of their everyday routine.
- This concept is the way in which humans can conquer ego, greed, attachment, anger and lust, together commonly called the Five Evils or Five Thieves and to bring peace and tranquility to the mind. Sikhs practise both the quiet individual recitation of Naam in one's mind commonly referred to as Naam Simran or the audible and often communal recitation of Naam that is called Naam Jaap. This act of meditation helps Sikhs to focus on their beliefs and how to put them into action in their everyday lives.
- This can be done by following the principles of Kirat Karo and Vand Chhako which are expressions of Naam Japo.

This is not a checklist, please remember to credit any valid alternatives.

- (b) **‘Naam Japo is far more important in Sikhism than Kirat Karo.
Evaluate this view.**

[15]

Candidates could include some of the following, but other relevant responses should be credited.

- Many would agree since it can be argued that the most important aspect of Sikhism is relationship with Waheguru.
- A Sikh's ultimate aim is liberation and union with Waheguru. In order to fulfil this aim Sikhs need to follow God's will at all times and this can be achieved through Naam Japo.
- It could be further argued that there is no value to any action in Sikhism if it is not done in Waheguru's name and for his glory.
- All acts in Sikhism are based on belief in God.
- However, others would argue that Kirat Karo is more important as it focuses on individual responsibilities, and it is individuals that form a community.
- Kirat Karo focuses on the individual developing the talents given by God and using them honestly to gain wealth. Without this personal success there would be no wealth to share with the needy in society. Therefore, Kirat Karo forms the basis for Vand Chhako.
- It also focuses on the individual's duty to work which creates the wealth needed for a successful community.
- Many would challenge this contention on the basis aspects of religion cannot be taken out of context and that a religion, its beliefs and practices must be taken as a whole. They are completely related to each other. Actions are an expression of belief. In this context the three pillars of Sikhism are linked and inter-dependent on each other: Naam Japo - keeping God in mind at all times; Kirat Karo - since God is truth, a Sikh seeks to live honestly; and, Vand Chhako - giving to charity and caring for others.
- Others would point out that the contention seems to suggest that faith and deeds can somehow be separated from each other. Many would refute that this is possible. Good actions follow from a believer's faith in God. They are not something which is external to that faith.
- In Sikhism it can be seen clearly that the main purpose of good deeds or actions is to become God-centred and therefore faith and action go hand in hand.

Overall, candidates should engage with the debate and come to a substantiated evaluation regarding the issue raised.

Section B

3. (a) Explain how ideas from Islam and Hinduism influenced Guru Nanak's key teachings. [15]

Candidates could include some of the following, but other relevant responses should be credited.

- The religious situation at the time of Guru Nanak - the influence and rivalry of Hinduism and Islam – influencing his decision to challenge aspects of both religions.

Islam

- The invasion of the Mughal army under Babur and Mughal persecution influenced his teaching on the importance of unity and community within Sikhism in order to safeguard Sikh belief and practice. Gurū Nānak witnessed the horrors of Bābur's invasions. He rebukes the relentless abuse and degradation of women by the invading armies. He also rebukes the lack of courageous spiritual leadership to respond to the atrocities.
- There was the influence of Sufism on the mystical aspects of Nanak's teaching on the immanence of God. This mystical branch of Islam emphasised inward devotion, contrasting more clerical and legalistic approaches. A much-celebrated Sufi figure of 13th century Punjāb was Sheikh Farīd. His rich Punjābi verse emphasised the everyday practice of love and forgiveness and Gurū Nānak refers to him in his own compositions.
- The status of women – subjugation.
- His friendship with Bhai Mardana.

Hinduism

- The concept of ritual pollution – influencing his belief that God did not favour any group above another. The influence of Guru Nanak's teaching on the divisiveness of Hinduism and the unity of human kind. No-one beyond God's grace. He rejected the perceived Hindu reliance and emphasis on rituals.
- There was the influence of both popular Hinduism and Hindu philosophical systems on the hymns of Guru Nanak.
- Another influence was the prominence of sectarian Hinduism, this had an influence on his teaching on equality.
- There was also the influence of bhakti and personal devotion to Krishna on Guru Nanak's belief in a personal God.
- The Hindu concept of Guru was yet another influence on his teaching and his interpretation of Guru as a guide from darkness to light.
- Lalla, a Kashmiri Shaivite who believed in a supreme being who could bring release by discovering that the One is within influenced Nanak's view of God.
- Rejection of religious divisions and caste system after his experience of God's court. Guru Nanak began teaching the importance of the equality of all people, regardless of their caste, religion or gender. Guru Nanak rejected the Sacred Thread ceremony when he was a young boy.
- The north-Indian sant tradition – influenced Nanak's teaching about the possibility of unity with God; that all caste and sectarian distinctions should be condemned; idol worship being opposed.

This is not a checklist, please remember to credit any valid alternatives.

- (b) **‘All Guru Nanak did was adapt the religious teachings of his time.’
Evaluate this view.** [15]

Candidates could include some of the following, but other relevant responses should be credited.

- Many would agree with the statement above whilst others would argue that Guru Nanak was a radical religious and social reformer.
- Some would argue that many of his beliefs and practices were rooted in those prevailing at the time and that they were at best merely adaptations of those beliefs and practices.
- The Sufi concepts of God were expressed in the Mool Mantra many of which are reflected in Guru Nanak’s teaching.
- The use of songs, hymns and poetry to worship God was very much influenced by Sufism.
- He did little during his lifetime to change or replace these other faiths.
- His community at Kartapur attracted pilgrims but had little impact.
- His teachings brought about a new religion in the long run but not during his lifetime.
- However, some would point out that he totally rejected the Hindu caste system and did not accept it at all. This was not only radical in religious terms but also socially. This teaching was a basis for social reform.
- He taught, practised and expressed equality of social status and women which was new at this time. This again was a radical teaching which completely transformed the religious and social norms of the period.
- He criticised the extreme asceticism of Hindu sadhus and he emphasized the importance of family and community life.
- He did not encourage ritual or see the need for a priesthood but instead offered the ideal role of the guru as the inspiring teacher and friend.

Overall, candidates should engage with the debate and come to a substantiated evaluation regarding the issue raised.

4. (a) **Examine the stages of the soul's development on the path of enlightenment.** [15]

Candidates could include some of the following, but other relevant responses should be credited.

- Gurū Nanak teaches that the soul goes on a journey through different stages of awareness which are called khand which means a 'region, realm or domain'. The word khand is used to identify five ascending domains of spiritual learning and growth.
- The first is Dharam Khand, the 'realm of duty, of righteous action'. It pictures the earth placed in the cosmos with its innumerable life forms and is described as a dharamsāl, a kind of school to practice dharam, where all beings are accountable for their actions and where enlightened guides and leaders are also to be found. The focus here is on living ethically and responsibly as a basis for spiritual development.
- The second is Giān Khand, the 'realm of knowledge and wisdom'. Here the mind is expanded to recognise the mesmerising diversity of realms and ways of being that exist; of planets in the universe, of divine and saintly figures, of teachers, of languages and cultures and lands governed in different ways. This expanse of knowledge and stretching out of one's horizons is both enlightening and humbling. It brings about feelings of awe and wonder and is described as joyfully resounding with melodies.
- The third is Saram Khand. In Sanskrit, 'saram' means 'effort' or 'endeavour', as well as 'joy' or 'bliss'. The former understandings, of effort and bliss, are brought out in this realm, which underlines the power of spiritual endeavour to inwardly transform e.g. by practising (rather than just 'knowing about') compassion.
- The final two realms are the 'realm of grace' (Karam Khand) and 'of truth' (Sach Khand). The fourth khand, based on the emphasis in Sikh teaching that effort relies also on divine blessings to bear fruit. Karam Khand is described as 'a realm overflowing with strength and beauty', where those who have heroically conquered their minds brim with remembrance of God.
- The fifth realm is Sach Khand, the realm of truth. It is where Nirankār, the Formless One resides, amidst the countless planets and universes which operate in accordance with the divine will, and where there is no language to describe it.

This is not a checklist, please remember to credit any valid alternatives.

- (b) **‘Sikh teaching about the soul has the greatest influence on the Sikh view of humanity.’**
Evaluate this view. [15]

Candidates could include some of the following, but other relevant responses should be credited.

- Sikhs believe in the oneness of humanity. This is the belief that all humans are equal because they were created by Waheguru, which means ‘Wonderful God’ or ‘Wonderful Lord’.
- Sikhs also believe that Waheguru is present in every individual as the divine spark. The words ‘atma’, ‘soul’ and ‘light’ are sometimes used for this divine spark. Because Sikhs believe that every living thing has a part of God within them, they believe that all humans should be treated equally and with respect – “If a beggar cries out at the door, the Master hears it in his mansion. Whether He receives him or pushes him away, it is the Gift of the Lord’s Greatness. 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.” Guru Granth Sahib 349.
- This belief that Waheguru is present as the divine spark in every individual affects how Sikhs treat people. Everybody is treated the same, whatever their gender, age, status or faith.
- Equality and the oneness of humanity are key Sikh principles which come directly from the Sikh understanding of the concept of the soul. Sikhs are taught to engage in selfless service for others - sewa.
- The belief that the divine spark is in all humans influences the Sikh belief that all humans should be treated respectfully and that they should not try to convert other people to Sikhism. This belief is called egalitarianism. Sikhs therefore believe that all faiths are inclusive and must be treated with respect and equality. Sikhs believe that all paths lead to the one true God.
- Others could argue that although the concept of the soul does have influence on the way Sikhs view humanity there are other influences that are just as important.
- Some would argue that Guru Nanak’s vision of God’s palace that is the most important influence or the virtues of the first Sikh community. The belief that all people are equal regardless of caste, race, religion or gender and it is possible to argue that it is this belief that is the greatest influence on the Sikh view of humanity.
- Others could argue that it is the practice of sewa - ‘selfless service’. It involves acting selflessly and helping others whoever they are in a variety of ways, without any reward or personal gain. It is a way of life for many Sikhs and is part of their daily routine.
- It is possible to argue that it is the teaching of the religion as a whole that influences the views and way of life of its followers.

Overall, candidates should engage with the debate and come to a substantiated evaluation regarding the issue raised.

5. (a) **Examine how the festival of Vaisakhi helps Sikhs to focus on the virtues of Sikh living.** [15]

Candidates could include some of the following, but other relevant responses should be credited.

- Vaisakhi reminds Sikhs of their duty to stand up for and protect their faith against attacks of any kind. Facing up to persecution was one of the main reasons for the founding of the Khalsa.
- It is also a celebration of the role and contribution of Guru Gobind Singh. He is regarded as a role-model of the virtues of Sikh life. Sikhs identify with him and the virtues he represents.
- It is also a celebration of Sikh history and traditions. These traditions are a very important part of Sikh lives and express the values of Sikh religious life.
- It also focuses on the role of the panj piars in the events at Vaisakhi – their complete commitment to their beliefs. They act as role models for Sikhs - an unwavering commitment to faith even in the face of death.
- It is a celebration of the origins of the Khalsa which many would associate with living a Sikh life. It is a celebration of the five outward signs of Sikh identity given at Vaisakhi by Guru Gobind Singh, each symbolising an important virtue of Sikh life. The wearing of the 5Ks is a daily reminder to Sikhs of the virtues they need to develop in life.
- It reminds Sikhs of the values identified with Sikhism – protecting the truth; the importance of community and a duty to oppose oppression and protect the oppressed. Expressing these values in everyday life is a way of expressing Sikh identity.
- It also focuses on the importance of self-sacrifice for the good of others. This is a very important belief in Sikhism and a virtue which Sikhs strive to attain.
- The festival reminds Sikhs of some of the spiritual values that shape their identity such as the duty to oppose evil and the need to help others.
- It also gives Sikhs a spiritual sense of belonging through the ceremony of Amrit. The Khalsa embodies the spiritual strengths of belonging to a community.

This is not a checklist, please remember to credit any valid alternatives.

(b) 'Celebrating historical events is essential in keeping Sikh identity.'

Evaluate this view.

[15]

- It can be argued that Sikh history has shaped Sikh identity – the festival of Vaisakhi commemorates the founding of the Khalsa which is so important to Sikh identity. It is a celebration of the role and contributions of Guru Gobind Singh who many believe gave Sikhism its unique identity. He founded the Khalsa at the Vaisakhi assembly at Anandpur. It can be argued that this was the most important event in the history of Sikhism, the event which safeguarded the religion for the future.
- Celebrating historical events can be a way of affirming religious beliefs which are a vital part of a religion's identity. It is a practical way of reminding people of the main beliefs of their religion and reminding them also of their significance within the religion because of their origins.
- It is a way of expressing publicly one's religious identity and tradition. A way of showing pride in a religion's traditions and culture.
- Vaisakhi is a celebration of Sikhism – a reminder of the unique teachings of the faith and the duty of Sikhs to protect them.
- It reminds Sikhs of their history and traditions and is therefore a chance to express the pride Sikhs take in their religion. It also focuses on the role of the panj piaries in the events at Vaisakhi – their complete commitment to their beliefs. They act as role models for Sikh identity - an unwavering commitment to faith.
- It reminds Sikhs of the values identified with Sikhism – protecting the truth; the importance of community and a duty to oppose oppression and protect the oppressed. Expressing these values in everyday life is a way of expressing Sikh identity.
- It also focuses on the importance of self-sacrifice for the good of others. This is a very important belief in Sikhism and therefore of Sikh identity.
- Vaisakhi unites the Sikh community - as its celebrated by Sikhs all over the world. It is therefore a worldwide expression of Sikh identity.
- Diwali celebrates a very important event in Sikh history - the release from prison of the sixth guru, Guru Hargobind, and 52 other princes with him, in 1619. It is a festival which is celebrated by the whole community and is especially popular with children and therefore is a very important way of teaching Sikh beliefs and values. It is the festival of lights and shows how light overcomes darkness, good overcomes evil, and knowledge overcomes ignorance" which is a very important message in the context of religious lifestyle and identity.
- However, others would argue that historical events are meaningless to many people who are not familiar with them. They are not familiar with the historical or religious significance of the events which are being celebrated. Therefore, the celebrations are merely understood as social occasions.
- Many of the events and their historical context are irrelevant today. Time has moved on and the customs and attitudes expressed in some historical events are irrelevant to the culture of modern society. Some historical events are better forgotten. There are events in many religions that do not always portray that religion and its followers in the best possible light.
- Many would argue that festivals are not essential since religion is a way of life and that identity is best expressed by living a religious lifestyle. It is actions that define identity.
- Identity is a complex idea and can be more personal than public.

- Outward signs and celebrations such as festivals are easy to present to the world but have no meaning in themselves so should not be relied upon to express Sikh faith and values.
- Many would argue further that celebrating festivals shows no commitment to a religion. Many regard them as merely social occasions.

Overall, candidates should engage with the debate and come to a substantiated evaluation regarding the issue raised.