



GCE A LEVEL MARKING SCHEME

SUMMER 2025

**A LEVEL
RELIGIOUS STUDIES - COMPONENT 1
OPTION F: A STUDY OF SIKHISM**

A120UF0-1

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. Examiners should not seek to mark candidates down as a result of small omissions in minor areas of an answer.

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.

A Level Generic Band Descriptors

Band	Assessment Objective AO1 – Part (a) questions 20 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	17-20 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 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. • Insightful connections are made between the various approaches studied. • An extensive range of views of scholars/schools of thought used accurately and effectively. • Thorough and accurate use of specialist language and vocabulary in context.
4	13-16 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 demonstrates depth and/or breadth. Good use of evidence and examples. • Accurate reference made to sacred texts and sources of wisdom, where appropriate. • Purposeful connections are made between the various approaches studied. • A range of scholarly views/schools of thought used largely accurately and effectively. • Accurate use of specialist language and vocabulary in context.
3	9-12 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 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. • Sensible connections made between the various approaches studied. • A basic range of scholarly views/schools of thought used. • Mainly accurate use of specialist language and vocabulary in context.
2	5-8 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. • 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. • Makes some basic connections between the various approaches studied. • A limited range of scholarly views/schools of thought used. • Some accurate use of specialist language and vocabulary in context.
1	1-4 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. • 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. • Little or no use of scholarly views/schools of thought. • Very few or no connections made between the various approaches studied. • Some grasp of basic specialist language and vocabulary. N.B. A maximum of 2 marks should be awarded for a response that only demonstrates 'knowledge in isolation'
0	• No relevant information.

Band	Assessment Objective AO2- Part (b) questions 30 marks <i>Analyse and evaluate aspects of, and approaches to, religion and belief, including their significance, influence and study.</i>
5	25-30 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. • Thorough, sustained and clear views are given, supported by extensive, detailed reasoning and/or evidence. • The views of scholars/schools of thought are used extensively, appropriately and in context. • Confident and perceptive analysis of the nature of connections between the various elements of the approaches studied. • Thorough and accurate use of specialist language and vocabulary in context.
4	19-24 marks • Purposeful analysis and effective evaluation of the issue. • The main issues raised by the question are identified successfully and addressed. • The views given are clearly supported by detailed reasoning and/or evidence. • Views of scholars/schools of thought are used appropriately and in context. • Purposeful analysis of the nature of connections between the various elements of the approaches studied. • Accurate use of specialist language and vocabulary in context.
3	13-18 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. • Most of the views given are satisfactorily supported by reasoning and/or evidence. • Views of scholars/schools of thought are generally used appropriately and in context. • Sensible analysis of the nature of connections between the various elements of the approaches studied. • Mainly accurate use of specialist language and vocabulary in context.
2	7-12 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. • A basic attempt to justify the views given, but they are only partially supported with reason and/or evidence. • Basic use of the views of scholars/schools of thought appropriately and in context. • Makes some analysis of the nature of connections between the various elements of the approaches studied. • Some accurate use of specialist language and vocabulary in context.
1	1-6 marks • A basic analysis and limited evaluation of the issue. • 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. • Little or no use of the views of scholars/schools of thought. • Limited analysis of the nature of connections between the various elements of the approaches studied. • Some use of basic specialist language and vocabulary.
0	• No relevant analysis or evaluation.

GCE A LEVEL RELIGIOUS STUDIES

COMPONENT 1: OPTION F – A STUDY OF SIKHISM

SUMMER 2025 MARK SCHEME

To be read in conjunction with the generic level descriptors provided.

Section A

1. (a) **Explain the attributes of ‘naam’ in Sikhism.** [AO1 20]

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

- Naam is seen as the creative and controlling power of God. It has no beginning and no end. Naam is also unchanging, ancient and eternal. It is the life current which pervades the entire creation. Without naam, the creation would decay and lead to its ultimate destruction.
- Naam allows Sikhs to connect with God, leading to a sense of contentment and peace, and bringing tranquillity for the mind. It also helps Sikhs to rid themselves of impurities and to be able to develop spiritual qualities and virtues. These are important if Sikhs are to achieve mukti. Sikhs believe that Waheguru is Truth and, therefore, they try to live in a truthful and honest way. Sikhs also believe that Waheguru cares for all of creation, and therefore, care and compassion towards others is an important aspect of a Sikh's life. Since Sikhs view humanity as one, they strive to be tolerant of all people in society.
- Sikhs also believe that everything is Hukam – God's will. This means that they should be content with the life they have been given by Waheguru and that it is this contentment which will lead to happiness. They should focus on his name rather than trying to build up material wealth.
- Naam can also lead Sikhs to show humility and self-control in their lives. This can be attained through prayer and meditation. Being humble allows Sikhs to see God's perfection and to understand that everyone is equal.
- Always focusing the mind on Waheguru also helps to develop wisdom and courage.
- The Panj Shabad refers to the five primordial sounds or melodies that were part of creation. God, at first, existed in a void and then came the five sounds or vibrations. Naam is the primal sound current, but in fact, it is only one continuous vibration. However, as it passes through the five different planes of existence, which all have different densities, it changes its frequency and this, in turn, creates the Panj Shabad. It has five distinct melodies which are contained in the mantra of Sat Naam. These melodies are called SSS, TTT, NNN, MMM and AAA. This is the Sat Naam mantra found in the Japji of Guru Nanak, but in its sound-current form. Sikhs believe that these come from God and are a way to be reunited with him.
Sikhs believe that these five sounds continually resonate within human beings but can only be heard if a person is continually focusing on the name of God.
- The Panj Khandas means the five stages or realms. It refers to the Sikh belief that they have to pass through five stages of spiritual progress before they can attain the Ultimate Truth. This is called 'mukti' when the soul becomes one with God. Spiritual progress in Sikhism is compared to a long journey, as the different stages are not attained in one lifetime, but over several lives. Progress through the different stages brings the Sikh closer to God.

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

(b) 'The 5 Khands are not of equal importance.'

Evaluate this view.

[AO2 30]

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

- Sikhs believe that they have to go through several stages (khands) to reach mukti, when the soul is free to find and become one with God. These stages are like the stages of a long journey, so they usually do not happen in one lifetime, but over several lifetimes. As Sikhs progress through these stages, they become closer to understanding truth and therefore closer to Waheguru.
- Sikhs do not believe in isolating themselves in order to focus on Waheguru. They believe that the community, or sangat, plays a very important part in the development of humans. They believe that God created humans to be with other people and so it is part of daily life that Waheguru is revealed.
- Many would argue that dharam khand is the most important as it is the first stage. For success in any field, it is necessary to have commitment and dedication to achieve the goal. Accordingly, the first step is to identify what is to be done and do it well. This is the realm of dutifulness or Dharam Khand. Dharam, which in English is referred to as Dharma. It also means religion and righteousness. As in any practical situation one is judged based on deeds or performance.
- The word dharam has been employed in the sense of duty. Duty is usually performed either out of a sense of social responsibility or through moral awareness. Guru Nanak links this sense of duty to man's consciousness of divine justice. This is the stage in which a sense of inquisitiveness is aroused in the mind of the devotee who is now no longer a casual onlooker of the world around but can perceive the divine purpose behind the creation of the earth and to respond to the Creator's purpose. This can be argued is the most important aspect as it gives a Sikh purpose and direction in life.
- Others might argue that gian khand is more important as it is the realm of knowledge. The seeker here becomes aware of the universe and the mystery of existence. Knowledge here is not merely intellectual or sensual; it is intuitive awareness, a spiritual consciousness which expands the vision of the seeker. His sense of wonder is born not merely of his awareness of the many forms of life or the ordered movement of numerous celestial spheres, but of his perception of God who is the sole force behind all. In front of this limitless variety of cosmic life, he feels humble.
- Some might argue for Saram khand which is the sphere of spiritual endeavour which could be argued is higher in importance than duty in the material world. It is a fight against the last remnants of ego. To become worthy of receiving the divine grace, one must chisel one's surati (consciousness) which is a unifying thread for all human faculties. This chiselling of intellect and wisdom would erase even the subtlest layers of ego from one's mind. During this stage, Sikhs devote their lives to Waheguru with an understanding of why. They develop their intelligence as far as possible and understand how they can become closer to Waheguru. During this stage, Sikhs realise the importance of the three foundations of Sikhism (Kirat Karna, Wand Chakna and Nam Japna). They also become disciplined in their daily acts of worship.

- Others would argue for the importance of Karam Khand (the realm of grace) is the sphere the Divine grace reigns. The process of liberation with grace initiated is now brought to completion. All sense of dualism ends. The devotee is one with the Lord and with those who have attained this state of bliss. One reaches here only after achieving a heroic victory over the evils. The fourth stage is only reached when Waheguru takes a part in the development of the individual. Grace is a blessing from God that is given and not earned. Through God's love and grace, Sikhs can spiritually grow. Sikhs only reach this stage once they have overcome the vices and made the virtues habits.
- Some would argue that sach khand is the most important as reaching this realm is the ultimate goal. Described as the abode of the Nirankar, the Formless One, sach khand is not a geographical spot, but the final state of the evolution of human consciousness. One can only experience it, but not describe it, for here words cease to have any meaning and no analogies can help in describing the Unique. Here in the Divine Court, the perfect ones rejoice in His presence. It is from here that His Will (hukam) goes out to the universe, and the liberated, grace-filled souls perform it joyously and effortlessly. The devotee becomes one with Him and realizes Him as a unifying force working through all objects of His creation. This final stage is when Sikhs find and understand the truth about Waheguru. This stage cannot be described, only experienced.
- Others could argue that they are of equal importance since they lead on from each other in order to reach the ultimate goal.

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

2. (a) Explain how the gurdwara fulfils the social and religious needs of the Sikh community.'

[AO1 20]

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

- There are four doors into a Gurdwara, known as the Door of Peace, the Door of Livelihood, the Door of Learning and the Door of Grace. These doors are a symbol that people from all four points of the compass are welcome, and that members of all four castes are equally welcome.
- Everyone sits on the floor in a Gurdwara. This is to be humble before the Guru Granth Sahib and because it gives everyone a place of equal status to sit. Equality being a prominent feature of Sikh teaching.
- The langar as a food kitchen was an essential part of any gurdwara in its provision of free meals for all people regardless of caste or religion in the local community in the Punjab. It enabled the followers of Guru Nanak to practise his ideal of sewa which was selfless service to others. The organisation and serving of langar to the members of the community provides the opportunity to practise sewa in the present day.
- In modern day food kitchens (langars) everyone sits together on the floor and free food is provided to everyone regardless of ethnicity and race, so it is a strong expression of equality
- In contemporary society lessons in the gurdwara provide education in Sikh culture for children, teaching them Sikh ethics, scriptures, customs and traditions. The gurdwara can provide guidance for the community in diaspora situations and this in turn safeguards Sikh identity and practice.
- It is a gathering place for festivals and special occasions which strengthen the community bonds and are an expression of identity.
- It is a place for congregational worship in the presence of the Guru where the Sikh community (sangat) can gather daily for kirtans (hymn singing) and listen to readings from the Adi Granth. Sikhs express their identity through worship.
- On special occasions important rites of passage such as naming ceremonies and marriages take place here. Again, they are an expression of distinctive Sikh beliefs and practices.
- Sometimes the gurdwara accommodates the granthi and others who organize daily services and who is available to the community as a spiritual leader. One of his roles is to maintain the integrity of Sikh identity. The initiation rite of amrit sanskar also takes place in the gurdwara which has the role of giving some Sikhs the chance to show full commitment to their faith and acts as an example to others.

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

(b) **‘Sewa in the langar is the most important practice in the gurdwara.’**

Evaluate this view.

[AO2 30]

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

- It is selfless service to others which affirms and expresses the Sikh belief in the equality of all human beings. Service rendered in accordance with God's will and without expectation of reward. Guru Granth also says there can be no worship without the practice of good deeds.
- Sewa is vital to the spiritual path cultivating humility and selflessness neutralising ego (haumai). Duty in all spheres of life and in particular service in the gurdwara/langar.
- It is important in context of sewa panth – a Sikh who has spent a life in service to the panth. It can be sewa of the mind (Man) i.e. developing and using talents and creativity and giving to others, giving material possessions and donating to charity (Dan) or physical service (Tan). These are important Sikh duties.
- It implies the dignity and sanctity of labour.
- It is an expression of Sikh identity.
- However other practices can be argued to be just as important or even more important.
- To many Sikhs the most important practice in the gurdwara is worship. The reading of the Guru Granth and Dasam Granth is an important practice as is the explanation of these readings and addresses on matters affecting the community, moral, social and political.
- Singing and music are also important practices since they give opportunities to express faith and devotion.
- Showing respect to the Guru Granth Sahib is another important practice in the gurdwara.
- Provision of classes is a practice that helps to support the religion in a number of ways e.g. safeguarding Punjabi language and culture for the future.

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

Section B

3. (a) Explain how the Guru Granth Sahib is regarded as a living guru in Sikhism.

[AO1 20]

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

- Guru Gobind Singh declared it to be a living Guru and his successor, thus bringing an end to the line of human gurus. This act has enormous implications for the role of the book within the community. As such it is regarded as a living guru.
- It is the supreme authority of the Sikhs as it is considered a living Guru and has the authority of the Gurus' teachings rather than the word of God. This is why it is sometimes called 'Gurbani', meaning the Guru's utterance. It is also known as the Adi Granth. A great many of the rituals and practices of Sikhism affirm this central and distinctive role.
- The Guru Granth Sahib has a central and essential role in naming ceremonies; rites of passage; worship; formation of doctrine; education. A human guru.
- On a daily basis Sikhs receive a hukam or divine order in the form of a hymn from the Guru Granth Sahib, either in a Gurdwara or at home. Similarly, at the end of a service, after the ardas, the Adi Granth is opened at random, and a portion is read. Many Sikhs do this daily, regarding the verses as words from God which they will find helpful during the day. This is called vak lao, taking advice. At the core of the idea of the hukam is to understand it so that one may apply it to one's life. It is consulted for daily advice in much the same way as a human guru would be. Again, this is the role of a living guru.
- No Sikh ceremony is regarded as complete unless it is performed in the presence of the Guru Granth Sahib again showing that it is regarded as a living guru.
- Guru Granth Sahib remains as a permanent unchangeable guide for all Sikhs as a living Guru or Teacher. It is a representation of the undaunted strength of the Sikh community.
- As a living guru it lays down moral and ethical rules for development of the soul, spiritual salvation and unity with God.
- The Guru Granth Sahib is truly unique among the world's great scriptures. It is considered the Supreme Spiritual Authority and Head of the Sikh religion, rather than any living person.
- It is treated with same detailed devotion as a living Guru, e.g. chauri waved over it and laid to rest at night.
- In worship the Guru Granth Sahib is the source of teaching for all sermons.
- In daily life Guru Granth Sahib remains as a permanent unchangeable guide for all Sikhs as a living Guru or Teacher. Through the Guru Granth Sahib Sikhs learn to live respectful, faithful and honest lives.

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

(b) 'The Guru Granth Sahib is not relevant for Sikhs today.'

Evaluate this view.

[AO2 30]

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

- It could be argued that many Sikhs do not understand the words of the Guru Granth Sahib but can still feel the devotion for God. It could be argued that the essential requirement for being a Sikh is understanding God.
- It could be argued that the guidance given in the Guru Granth Sahib because it was written hundreds of years ago is no longer relevant today.
- It could also be argued that the Guru Granth Sahib does not address the specific problems of contemporary society.
- Some could argue that being a Sikh is more practically based on living life based on the principle of selflessness today rather than on the teaching and guidance of the Guru Granth Sahib. Equality is a concept and practice that many would argue is an essential part of being a Sikh.
- It can be argued that faith and devotion is the basis for all other aspects of being a Sikh so living a good life as a Sikh has to be rooted in faith in the Guru Granth Sahib which makes it relevant to all Sikhs.
- The nature and purpose of the Guru Granth Sahib is to have complete faith and devotion to God and the saving power of God. Therefore, it can be argued that this is essential guidance for being a Sikh is always relevant.
- The main principles of selflessness and overcoming evil tendencies and developing divine nature are the teachings in the Guru Granth Sahib so understanding these will ensure life will be lived as a Sikh.
- The Guru Granth Sahib gives profound insights into the nature of reality and forms the basis for Sikh outlook on life based on gratitude for human existence.
- The Guru Granth Sahib is the focus of all Sikh ceremonies and therefore to understand the Guru Granth Sahib is to understand the nature and purpose of these ceremonies.
- The Guru Granth Sahib is also the focus of Sikh worship. Practice and lifestyle and therefore it could be argued is a complete guide to being a Sikh and therefore relevant to all Sikhs.
- Sikhism has no other holy book with the same status as the Guru Granth Sahib
- Some candidates could argue that other guidance for being a Sikh is needed in contemporary society, such as the Rahit Maryada.

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

4. (a) Explain philosophical understanding of the Sikh concept of God.

[AO1 20]

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

- The opening sentence of the Sikh scriptures is only two words long and reflects the base belief of all who adhere to the teachings of the religion: Ek Onkar "Ek" is One and "Onkar" is God - "There is only one God."
- Sikh understanding of God is mainly taken from the teaching of the Mul Mantra 'One God, True Name, Creator, Without Fear, Without Hate, Eternal, Without Birth, Self-revealed, By the Guru's Grace.'
- Sikhs believe in the Oneness of God. Unity of God as distinguished from the many gods of Hinduism.
- Sikhs believe that there is only one God but that this is the God of all religions. No single religion can claim to be the only true way to Waheguru, and different religions are just different ways towards Waheguru.
- Sikhs believe that God is eternal and has not come to earth in any bodily form. This distinguishes the Sikh notion from Hindu avatars.
- God is creator, created the world and is immanent in all things animate and inanimate. Sikhs believe that God created human beings and imbued them with the ability to know right and wrong. God also created the Earth for the enjoyment of human beings. Although God created the universe within his being, the universe is not God itself, and prior to the creation of a distinct universe, God was alone.
- God has shown grace by revealing the gurbani (God's word) which is found in the Guru Granth Sahib, understood by Sikhs as the living presence of God.
- God is self-revealing and could not otherwise be known. Sikhs believe that God can't be understood properly by human beings, but he can be experienced through love, worship, and contemplation.
- God as nirguna and saguna, without form and with form, or without qualities and with them.
- God's nature is two-fold in the Sikh religion and the first part is transcendent. God exists outside of the material world and has no gender and no form. In the transcendent form, God exists outside of time and the cycle of death and rebirth that characterizes existence for followers of Sikhism.
- Although the Sikh God is transcendent, he also has a very real presence within the world, known as his immanent form. God's immanent form manifests itself in his Word, which guides and sustains the universe.

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

- (b) **‘The most important Sikh teaching about God is that God is personal.’**

Evaluate this view.

[AO2 30]

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

- It is one of Guru Nanak’s most important beliefs about God – a personal God who could be worshipped and loved. This understanding of God was derived from his own personal experience of God’s court. There he became aware of God as one, personal and as pervading the universe. Because it derives from Guru Nanak’s personal experience it gives the teaching importance and authority.
- Sikhism believes in a personal God. The devotee is compared to a bride yearning for union with her husband and waiting on his pleasure to do his bidding. This influences Sikh worship and lifestyle.
- The teaching on God as personal avoids the arguments for sectarian superiority within Sikhism. God is understood as personal but not in an anthropomorphic way. God does not grow old and changes are caused by God and he is not affected by them. In the teachings of Guru Nanak God is self-enlightened.
- Others would argue that the teaching on God as personal distinguishes Sikhism in many respects from Hinduism.
- However, many would argue that the teachings on God’s other attributes are just as important.
- Some would argue for the importance of God as creator. As there are no creation stories in Sikhism, only a belief that the universe came into being because God willed it, the religion has no difficulty in coming to terms with scientific theories of evolution. In fact, finding them congenial to the belief in an expanding universe derived from the mind of God. This means that Sikhism avoids much of the conflict between science and religion and makes Sikhism appealing in today’s world.
- Others would argue for the importance of God as one as it is the feature which defines Sikhism as being a monotheistic religion.
- Others would argue for the teaching on God as waheguru – a teaching which is unique to Sikhism.

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

5. (a) Examine the compatibility of Sikh beliefs with secular society.

[AO1 20]

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

- A secular state is a state that is neutral in matters of religion i.e., does not show any favouritism towards followers of a particular religion or to those who follow no religion.
- Many believe that the main beliefs of Sikhism make compatibility possible. Sikhism is a non-missionary religion and does not seek to convert others to the faith believing in religious pluralism and tolerance. Sikhs also believe in the equality of all religions and the diversity of paths leading to God. These beliefs make it clear that Sikhism does not expect to be given privileges over any other religion. Sikhism believes that every individual has the right to choose their religion and the freedom to practice it. The Guru Granth Sahib reflects this belief as it contains teachings from leaders of different faiths, and Sikh gurdwaras welcome people from all faiths and background.
- In Sikhism the sacred and secular are closely intertwined. Sikhs are encouraged to live the life of a householder, which means living in the midst of society and not apart from it. They are also encouraged to play a full part in the development of society. Secular or worldly duties are expected to be performed side by side with religious duties. Sikhism does not condemn the comforts of life nor worldly gain.
- Living in a secular state is also a very important part of Sikh history in the context of the Sikh Empire of Maharaja Ranjit Singh. The diversity of a secular state fits in with Sikh beliefs.
- The Sikh belief that all people are equal regardless of race or gender is also compatible with human rights laws or charters which are followed in a secular society. Sikhs also believe that every person should be treated with respect and dignity. Sikhs regard men and women as equal in all spheres of life. This means that Sikhism does not come into conflict with those values.
- Sikhs believe in the unity and oneness of humanity. This is shown through how they act in the gurdwara and the local community. Gurdwaras welcome people from all backgrounds to come and share a meal together. It is a statement of the belief in equality as well as the belief in supporting the community. The tradition started very early in the history of Sikhism as a religion when people from all castes would sit side by side to eat together. This, of course, broke the very strict social rules of the time.
- The Sikh belief in social action is also important as it shows welfare for all irrespective of religion or no religion. A Sikh is part of society and is obliged to work for the success of that society. This means working to reform society for the better.
- It could be said that the Guru Granth Sahib presents a Sikh concept of secularism, 'All have equal rights in affairs. Nobody is an outsider.' (Guru Granth Sahib, p.97). Guru Nanak saw every religion as being equal.

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

(b) 'Sikh responses to the challenges of secularisation are effective.'

Evaluate this view.

[AO2 30]

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

- In Sikhism, sacred and secular are co-mingled but purified. Guru Nanak secularised religion by divesting it of mystery, miracles, magic, divine incarnation and supernatural mediation between man and God and purified secularism by investing it with equality, mutual respect, goodwill, morality, equal opportunity, religious toleration and openness in administration. Therefore, it can be argued that Sikh response is effective.
- Sikhs have succeeded in integrating into British society. This is true in all areas of society – politics, business and medicine which clearly shows an effective response to a secular society.
- The diversity of British culture allows different religions to flourish, and Sikhs have succeeded in keeping their identity and Punjabi culture. The gurdwara has developed as a social centre within the community and helped preserve Sikh traditions. Over 200 gurdwaras have been established.
- It can be argued that contrary to the secularisation thesis, there are many parts of the world where religion appears to be thriving or reviving under the influence of fundamentalist ideas that advocate unwavering obedience to religious laws throughout society. This can be argued to be true in some aspects of Sikhism and therefore a valid and effective response.
- However, in India, Sikh separatists challenged the secular state; and after the violent conquest of the Golden Temple in Amritsar, Sikh bodyguards assassinated Indira Gandhi. This can be argued to be an ineffective response since it led to violence.
- Some may argue that by living in a secular society, faiths are encouraged to work alongside one another in interfaith work.
- There is evidence of weakening effect of religion on marriage, family and many institutions, but it is also a fact that there is evidence of the continuing vitality of religion. The decline in formal religious practices does not necessarily indicate the secularisation process is having a major impact upon Sikhism, and that Sikh responses in adapting its religious practices can be seen as effective.
- It can be argued that religion as a source of personal meaning and fulfilment survives much more widely and with greater vitality than institutional religion. The secularisation thesis is, therefore, less applicable to personal religion than to formal religion. Sikhism, it can be argued, is a personal religion as its aim is union with God, and therefore can deal with the challenges of secularisation.
- However, there has been conflict with secularisation in some areas. One area of conflict has been the Sikh dress, the wearing of the turban and the five Ks. Also, the rise in intercommunal and racial tension, and prejudice and discrimination.
- Another challenge for Sikhs is trying to practice Sikh values and principles, as defined in the Rahit Maryada, in a secular society built on the values of materialism.

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