

## Support for centres with AO2: some suggestions for teaching

**NB the nature of this information is for developing AO2. What follows are NOT definitive answers – lines of argument are suggested in order to demonstrate the skills of AO2, but the WJEC strongly advises further development and for teachers and candidates to apply their own ideas and evaluation in response to the materials already provided.**

For the skills of AO2 it is important to remember that what is being assessed are skills of evaluation and not simply knowledge and understanding of content. The six bullets for each Theme are listed beneath the AO1 content. They are NOT questions in themselves but rather indications of the areas of debate that may arise in a typical AO2 question statement. In addition, as AO1 material is studied the whole purpose of AO2 is to approach an understanding of the AO1 material in a critical and evaluative way that is very much a rigorous and academic discipline.

One of the most common features of a Principal Examiner's report is the regular comment that candidates just **present lists of views** in support of and/or challenging an argument often in response to a question expecting an evaluation. So, for instance, a typical mark scheme may list bullets of points to consider but to repeat them does not demonstrate AO2. How the points are **USED** and **DEVELOPED** by the teacher and candidate to form critical analysis and evaluation is crucial and transforms any suggested material into academic debate that mirrors the AO2 Band descriptors.

There is nothing wrong with preparing your considerations and reflections of a topic in response to the 'Issues for evaluation and analysis' section of the Specification; however, what is important is **making sure that there is some form of personal analysis or commentary throughout the answer** that can then be **used to form a reasonable conclusion**.

Evaluation and analysis skills present themselves as a constant dialogue between the voice of the evidence or the views that you are selecting, and that of your own voice, with the end result of you having the final word that states clearly your position [conclusion(s)].

## Sikhism A level (Yr 2)

### Theme 1: Religious figures and sacred texts

Sikhism Theme 1 DEF considers six starting points for evaluation focus.

**The first bullet point is to consider the relative importance of the Mul Mantra and the Japji of Guru Nanak in Sikh worship**

The following six points may be used as a starting point in developing a suitable argument:

1. The importance of the Mul Mantra can be seen clearly in its role as a mantra as it allows Sikhs to recite God's name in 'sat nam' to purify the mind and come close to God. The recitation of the Mul Mantra is a central part of daily prayers and so brings Sikhs into relationship with God every day.
2. The Mul Mantra has fundamental importance as a statement of faith. It reminds Sikhs of some of the identifying beliefs of their religion. Others could argue that the Japji is itself an elaboration of the Mul Mantra which is the kernel of Sikh spirituality. As such they are both as important as each other and are the main pillars of Sikh worship.
3. The further importance of the Japji can be seen in the fact that it is chanted in the Sikh tradition at the initiation ceremony and during the cremation ceremony. It was also composed by Guru Nanak, the founder of the Sikh faith, it is the most important prayer of the Sikhs.
4. It can be argued that the singing of Kirtan and sermons and lectures explaining the words are more important aspects of Sikh worship.
5. Towards the end of the service, the Ardas prayer is said. This can be argued to be as or more important as the Ardas remembers God and the Ten Gurus and asks God to bless the Sikhs and all humanity and to help them be faithful to the scriptures.
6. There are other elements of Sikh worship which can be argued to be more important for Sikhs such as prayers said for specific individuals, for example, sick people in the community and then Karah Parshad is shared.

Key questions that may arise could be:

1. To what extent is reciting a statement of faith an important part of worship?
2. Has the use of the mul Mantra and japji in Sikh worship lost its meaning and become merely a ritual?
3. How important is the Japji in relation to the Mul Mantra within Sikh worship?
4. To what extent are other elements of worship more important to Sikhs than the Mul Mantra and Japji?
5. Is it possible to make a valid comparison of the importance of different elements of worship??

Possible conclusions to some arguments put forward could be:

- The Mul Mantra and Japji are the most important elements of Sikh worship.
- There are other aspects within Sikh worship that can be deemed to be more important than the Mul Mantra and Japji.
- Worship is more than the sum of individual elements and must be considered as a whole.

## Theme 1: Religious figures and sacred texts

Sikhism Theme 1 DEF considers six starting points for evaluation focus.

**The second bullet point is to consider the relative importance of the Japji of Guru Nanak and the Mul Mantra as statements of faith within Sikhism.**

The following six points may be used as a starting point in developing a suitable argument:

1. The Japji is often referred to as a summary of the Guru Granth Sahib and as such expresses the key Sikh beliefs.
2. The Japji introduces some of the key themes of Sikhism such as the force of grace driving spiritual development and the importance of cultivating virtue and as such is a statement of faith.
3. Mul means 'essence' and Sikhs describe it as the nearest formula they have to a creedal statement.
4. The Mul Mantra encapsulates the concept of the divinity which Guru Nanak experienced and, as such, is the basis of all teaching.
5. It is said that the rest of the Guru Granth Sahib is an elaboration and detailed amplification of the Mul Mantra.
6. Some might claim that the Japji is itself an elaboration of the Mul Mantra which is the kernel of Sikh spirituality.

Key questions that may arise could be:

1. Does the Japji contain all key Sikh beliefs?
2. What are the significant Sikh beliefs not included in the Japji and Mul Mantra?
3. To what extent is the Japji an elaboration of the Mul Mantra?
4. To what extent is the Mul Mantra the basis of the Guru Granth Sahib?
5. Are there other more significant statements of faith in Sikhism?

Possible conclusions to some arguments put forward could be:

- The Japji of Guru Nanak is the most important statement of faith in Sikhism.
- The Mul Mantra is the most important expression of Sikh beliefs.
- There is not one statement of faith in Sikhism which can be regarded as being more important than another. They are different expressions of key Sikh beliefs.

## Theme 1: Religious figures and sacred texts

Sikhism Theme 1 DEF considers six starting points for evaluation focus.

### The third bullet point is to consider the relative merits of the contributions to Sikhism of Guru Arjan.

The following six points may be used as a starting point in developing a suitable argument:

1. The Guru laid the foundation of the Golden Temple (Harmandir Sahib) in Amritsar. He introduced Dasvandh (a semi-mandatory requirement) for Sikhs to contribute voluntarily, ten percent of their income for the charitable causes. This enabled him to fund many of his contributions. This contribution can be considered in the context of Sikh aspirations for a homeland.
2. He also designed the four doors in a Gurdwara. This contribution strengthened Sikhism as an inclusivist tradition.
3. He collected the hymns Sikhs used in their worship and put them together in one authoritative collection – the Adi Granth.
4. It can be argued that his martyrdom changed the course of Sikh history.
5. He developed Amritsar as a centre of excellence. This gave all Sikhs a focal point to their religion.
6. It could be argued that Guru Arjan was too kind hearted to be an effective leader and that this was what led to his execution and persecution by the Mughal empire.

Key questions that may arise could be:

1. To what extent has the Golden Temple been a source of strength for Sikh aspirations?
2. Did the inclusivist nature of Guru Arjan's contributions strengthen or weaken Sikh identity?
3. Did the martyrdom of Guru Arjan change the course of Sikhism for the better?
4. How important is a focal point for a religion?
5. To what extent was Guru Arjan naïve in his political actions?

Possible conclusions to some arguments put forward could be:

- Guru Arjan's contributions made a significant difference to the development of Sikhism.
- Not all Guru Arjan's contributions were beneficial to Sikhism.
- His most important contribution to the development of Sikhism was his martyrdom.

## Theme 1: Religious figures and sacred texts

Sikhism Theme 1 DEF considers six starting points for evaluation focus.

**The fourth bullet point is to consider the extent to which the status of the Gurus is over exaggerated in Sikhism.**

The following six points may be used as a starting point in developing a suitable argument:

1. Sikhs show the Gurus profound respect for their contributions to Sikhism, but it falls well short of worship.
2. The Gurus themselves admonished their followers not to regard them as avatars, divine incarnations. However they are regarded as being divinely inspired.
3. The Gurus are regarded as being responsible for founding, developing and defending Sikhism. Without their contribution there would be no Sikh faith.
4. In Gurdwaras portraits of the Gurus are kept well away from the guru Granth Sahib and in some gurdwaras no such pictures are to be found in the worship room , so that nothing might even appear to rival the authority of the Guru Granth Sahib.
5. It could be argued that the importance of the Sikh Gurus is confined to their historical context and that their influence on contemporary Sikhism is over exaggerated.
6. Some would argue that the Sikh Gurus were not innovators but simply responded to the events that they were faced with.

Key questions that may arise could be:

1. To what extent is the line between respect and worship clouded in relation to the Sikh Gurus?
2. Would the Sikh faith have survived without the Gurus' contribution?
3. In what ways could the status afforded to the Sikh Gurus be seen as a threat to the status of the Guru Granth Sahib?
4. What is the role of the Gurus in Sikhism today?
5. To what extent can it be argued that the Sikh Gurus were innovators?

Possible conclusions to some arguments put forward could be:

- Status of the Gurus in Sikhism is over exaggerated.
- The Gurus are given the status they deserve in Sikhism.
- The status afforded to the Gurus in Sikhism is understated.

## Theme 1: Religious figures and sacred texts

Sikhism Theme 1 DEF considers six starting points for evaluation focus.

**The fifth bullet point is to consider the extent to which the Sikh empire of Maharaja Ranjit Singh was religious.**

The following six points may be used as a starting point in developing a suitable argument:

1. Ranjit Singh did not proclaim Sikhism to be the state religion, nor did he make any conscious efforts to propagate his religion. His broad religious outlook was reflected in according due respect to all religions.
2. In the vision of the Sikh Gurus, a sane human society was essentially a plural one. This vision was developed by Ranjit Singh in that it allowed religious freedom and did not promote only Sikhism.
3. He did not treat the Sikhs as a privileged class and did not place any disabilities on his non-Sikh subjects. Nor did he interfere with the religious and cultural life of other communities. They were allowed to freely practise their religions without payment of a special tax. There were no discriminating tariffs. Ranjit Singh gave complete freedom of expression and worship to all his subjects.
4. Ranjit Singh's employment policy reflected the basic liberal and humanitarian teaching of Sikhism. The highest posts in his Government were as open to Muslims as to the Sikhs and the Hindus. This again supports a pluralistic view and not just promoting Sikhism.
5. Ranjit Singh built his rule on religious foundations. He referred to his Government as Sarkar-i-Khalsa, which derived its legitimacy from the Khalsa. He attributed every success to the favour of God and he styled himself and the people collectively as the Khalsa or Commonwealth of Gobind. His state salutation was Wahe-i-Guru Ji Ka Khalsa, Wahe-i-Guru Ji Ki Fateh (Khalsa belongs to God and its victory is the victory of God). His official seal bore the word- Akal Sahai (May God help). The term also indicated that the Khalsa did not owe its allegiance to any earthly power and acted in total devotion to Akal (The Timeless Reality). This developed Sikhism as a practical way of life.
6. It can be argued that Ranjit Singh developed Sikhism as a universal religion and that this became the foundation of his empire making it religious in nature. Religious bigotry, he knew was incompatible with Sikhism. The idea of unity of God, universal brotherhood and welfare of all (Sarbat da Bhala) which summed up the basic tenets of Sikhism, enabled him to restore complete religious harmony in his kingdom.

Key questions that may arise could be:

1. What are the features of a 'religious empire'?
2. To what extent is it possible to separate the political from the religious?
3. Was Ranjit Singh driven by political or religious goals?
4. Which Sikh beliefs if any were not followed by Ranjit Singh?
5. To what extent did Ranjit Singh strengthen or weaken Sikh identity?

Possible conclusions to some arguments put forward could be:

- Ranjit Singh's empire was secular in nature but allowed religious freedom.
- It was a religious empire founded on key Sikh beliefs.
- It is impossible to separate the religious/secular/political from each other.

## Theme 1: Religious figures and sacred texts

Sikhism Theme 1 DEF considers six starting points for evaluation focus..

**The sixth bullet point is to consider the extent to which Maharaja Ranjit Singh can be regarded as more important in the development of Sikhism than Guru Arjan.**

The following six points may be used as a starting point in developing a suitable argument:

- Sikhism remained strong and the period is looked back upon as a Golden Age.
- Ranjit Singh developed Sikhism as a universal religion.
- Ranjit Singh's behaviour led to a collapse of Sikh identity back into Hinduism. During his reign many Gurdwaras got Hindu statues in them. Brahmins were given high class jobs in his administration. Khalsa membership declined. As a consequence of these facts a strong Sikh identity was almost lost in the period of religious pluralism and tolerance.
- The Guru laid the foundation of the Golden Temple (Harmandir Sahib) in Amritsar which is regarded as a powerful symbol of Sikh identity.
- He collected the hymns Sikhs used in their worship and put them together in one authoritative collection – the Adi Granth. This gave Sikhs a distinct scripture.
- It can be argued that his martyrdom changed the course of Sikh history.

Key questions that may arise could be:

- What was Ranjit Singh's contribution to the development of the Golden Age?
- To what extent did Ranjit Singh's contribution develop Sikhism as an universal religion or was Sikhism an universal religion before his period??
- Are the criticisms of Ranjit Singh in the context of Sikh identity fair? Do his achievements outweigh his weaknesses?
- In what ways did Guru Arjan change the course of Sikh history in a way that Ranjit Singh did not??
- Whose contribution has the most influence on Sikhism today?

Possible conclusions to some arguments put forward could be:

- Ranjit Singh is more important in the development of Sikhism.
- Guru Arjan is more important in the development of Sikhism especially in terms of influence on the religion today.
- Both made significant contributions to the development of Sikhism in different periods and can be viewed as being just as important as each other.

### Theme 3: Significant social and historical developments in religious thought

Sikhism Theme 3 ABC considers six starting points for evaluation focus.

#### The first bullet point is to consider the significance of persecution in shaping Sikhism.

The following six points may be used as a starting point in developing a suitable argument:

1. Candidates may argue that persecution has been a significant feature of Sikh history and give examples as evidence. Sikhs have been plagued by a lot of violence and martyrdom after Adi Granth was compiled. Guru Arjan died in a display of heroism that Sikhs are proud of, and it is the first known martyrdom of the Sikh religion
2. The next guru to follow Guru Arjan, Hargobind as response to Arjan's death militarized and politicized his position.
3. Another significant martyrdom which influenced the development of Sikhism is that of Guru Bahadur, the ninth guru, because it is believed that it was this event that led to the creation of the Khalsa.
4. The tenth Guru, Gobind Singh transformed the Sikhs into a militant brotherhood dedicated to defense of their faith at all times. He instituted a baptism ceremony involving the immersion of a sword in sugared water that initiates Sikhs into the Khalsa (khalsa from the Persian term for "the king's own," often taken to mean army of the pure) of dedicated devotion. The outward signs of this new order were the "Five Ks" to be observed at all times.
5. However, candidates could argue that the relationship between Sikhs and Muslims during the Mughal period was mixed and at times Sikhism flourished which was not caused by persecution, but through understanding and co-operation between both communities.
6. It could be argued that Sikhism is shaped not so much by persecution, but rather by its beliefs such as its concept of God and its concept of equality, and by its practices such as sewa.

Key questions that may arise could be:

1. What are the significant developments in Sikhism directly influenced by persecution?
2. How is Sikh identity shaped by persecution?
3. To what extent are Sikh beliefs the cause or result of persecution?
4. Is persecution still a factor in the development of Sikhism?
5. What other factors could be argued to have shaped Sikhism?

Possible conclusions to some arguments put forward could be:

- The major developments in the history of Sikhism have been shaped by persecution.
- Other factors have had more of an influence on shaping Sikhism than persecution.
- Persecution is one factor which has had an important influence on the development of Sikhism.



### Theme 3: Significant social and historical developments in religious thought

Sikhism Theme 3 ABC considers six starting points for evaluation focus.

**The second bullet point is to consider the relative importance within Sikhism as a whole of the aspiration for Khalistan, Punjabi language and culture.**

The following six points may be used as a starting point in developing a suitable argument:

1. In 1799 Ranjit Singh captured Lahore and in 1801 established the Punjab as an independent state. It could be argued that a Sikh state has always been an aspiration within Sikhism.
2. Many would argue that the attainment of a Sikh state is essential for safeguarding Sikh identity.
3. Sikhism emerged in a Punjabi speaking context and whilst the Gurmukhi script differs from modern Punjabi, non-Punjabi speakers are even further excluded from understanding it and participating in religious life.
4. Sikhism is a religion strongly identified with a region and its culture. It is difficult to 'distill' the religion from the culture.
5. Many young Sikhs are rejecting the link between religion and language and culture, preferring to see the link to culture as unnecessary, whilst religion is an important identity marker.
6. The Gurus spoke about the importance of religion being expressed in the vernacular. The vernacular in the British Sikh population is no longer Punjabi but English.

Key questions that may arise could be:

1. To what extent has the aspiration for a Sikh state always been present in Sikhism??
2. Is a Sikh state essential for the expression of Sikh identity?
3. To what extent does the emphasis on Punjabi language and culture make assimilation into British society?
4. Is it possible to express Sikh identity without Punjabi language and culture?
5. Is it possible to practice Sikhism without the influence of its cultural roots?

Possible conclusions to some arguments put forward could be:

- The aspiration for Khalistan, Punjabi language and culture is essential for practicing Sikhism and expressing Sikh identity.
- There are more important elements within Sikhism for expressing Sikh identity such as the teaching on equality and sewa.
- It is an important factor, but not essential for being a Sikh.

### Theme 3: Significant social and historical developments in religious thought

Sikhism Theme 3 ABC considers six starting points for evaluation focus.

**The third bullet point is to consider the extent to which feminism has always been part of Sikhism.**

The following six points may be used as a starting point in developing a suitable argument:

1. It can be argued that Sikhism has become patriarchal; filled with “machismo” and a “warrior” mentality that often contradicts its original teachings.
2. The founder of Sikhism, Guru Nanak (1469–1539), was a truly “egalitarian,” “inclusive” man and a champion of women’s rights.
3. If Sikhism advocates equality then why do some Sikh women take a backseat in so many areas of life? Why are some Sikh women not always allowed to go where they want to go or to speak up truly about what they feel? Why, in some Sikh families is a male baby still celebrated more than a female baby?
4. It can be argued that feminism is a contemporary concept and therefore different to the issue of equality of women which can be argued to have always been a part of Sikhism.
5. Others may say Sikhism has at its core is more universal and humanistic core. It requires women and men to reflect on how they may or may not be contributing to this idea of equality between the sexes.
6. “Guru Nanak is to me a feminist,” says Sikh scholar Nikky-Guninder Kaur Singh, but she argues that today almost all the sacred duties within Sikhism are performed by men. She claims that such patriarchy defies Sikhism’s liberationist core.

Key questions that may arise could be:

1. To what extent can Sikhism be described as a patriarchal religion?
2. Is there a difference between feminism and advocating women’s rights?
3. What is the influence of feminism on Sikh practice?
4. To what extent is it fair to describe Guru Nanak as a feminist?
5. Is it possible to interpret Sikh teachings in a way that makes them appear feminist or to support feminist aims?

Possible conclusions to some arguments put forward could be:

- Feminism has always been a natural part of Sikhism.
- Feminism is a modern concept which cannot be regarded as being an integral part of Sikh teaching.
- Sikh teaching supports some aspects of feminism.

### Theme 3: Significant social and historical developments in religious thought

Sikhism Theme 3 ABC considers six starting points for evaluation focus.

#### The fourth bullet point is to consider

The following six points may be used as a starting point in developing a suitable argument:

1. It could be argued that Sikhism has strong cultural roots in traditional Indian values and these undoubtedly inhibit the equality of women.
2. Others may argue that equality is a Western idea and that different roles of men and women in the family and community is valued more than equality of status. Sikhism puts great emphasis on the family, and roles within the family give each individual their status and importance.
3. Customs are changing. In the older generation a wife may walk the traditional three paces behind her husband, but young Sikh couples are more likely to be seen strolling hand in hand.
4. Sikh women can take the name 'Kaur' instead of their husband's name which establishes their personal independence.
5. Women have always had an important role in Sikh history e.g. the contribution of the wife of Guru Gobind Singh.
6. Women are fully involved in running and organising the Sikh community, serving in the gurdwara and langar serves as an effective social leveller.

Key questions that may arise could be:

1. To what extent is Sikhism a patriarchal religion?
2. Is there a difference between Sikh teaching on equality and its practice?
3. Is equality between the sexes implicit in Sikh practices rather than explicit?
4. Is the equality between men and women superficial?
5. To what extent is equality religious or cultural?

Possible conclusions to some arguments put forward could be:

- Men and women are equal in Sikhism.
- Men and women are equal in Sikh teaching but not in practice.
- Men and women are equal in some aspects of Sikhism but not in all.

### Theme 3: Significant social and historical developments in religious thought

Sikhism Theme 3 ABC considers six starting points for evaluation focus.

**The fifth bullet point is to consider the extent to which Sikhism can be regarded as a non-missionary religion.**

The following six points may be used as a starting point in developing a suitable argument:

1. Guru Nanak's first words after enlightenment were 'There is neither Hindu nor Mussulman (Muslim) so whose path shall I follow? I shall follow God's path. God is neither Hindu nor Mussulman and the path I follow is God's.'
2. Sikhs believe that all those that believe in One God, irrespective of their faith are devotees of God, whether he is a Sikh, Christian, Hindu, Buddhist, or a Muslim. However, if a person is completely 'off -track' and is worshiping deities or other humans instead of God, then Sikhs believe it is their duty to enlighten him or her to show them the path towards God.
3. Guru Nanak taught his followers to focus on meditation of God instead of glorifying a religion.
4. Guru Gobind Singh declared: 'He is in the temple as in the mosque, In the Hindu worship as in the Muslim prayer.' This is the basic Sikh belief. The Sikh attitude towards other religions and their followers flows from this basic belief.
5. Sikhism discredits no religion. According to Sikhism all religions originated with good intentions and are like different roads leading to the same destination.
6. Sikhism makes no claim of exclusivity in dogma. In speaking of the road to salvation, the Gurus spoke of the universality of the human condition.

Key questions that may arise could be:

1. To what extent does Sikh history support the view of Sikhism as a non-missionary religion?
2. Is the Sikh view of other religions an integral part of Sikh identity?
3. To what extent does Sikh practice support the view of a non-missionary religion?
4. What is the purpose of the khalsa if Sikhism is a non-missionary religion?
5. Is the concept of a non-missionary religion possible?

Possible conclusions to some arguments put forward could be:

- Sikhism is clearly a non-missionary religion.
- There are aspects of Sikhism which are clearly non-missionary but others which are not.
- Sikhism cannot be regarded as a non-missionary religion.

### Theme 3: Significant social and historical developments in religious thought

Sikhism Theme 3 ABC considers six starting points for evaluation focus.

**The sixth bullet point is to consider the extent to which Sikhism is an exclusivist or inclusivist tradition.**

The following six points may be used as a starting point in developing a suitable argument:

1. Candidates could define the meaning of inclusivism – it is one of several different approaches to understanding the relationship between religions. It asserts that while one set of beliefs is absolutely true other sets of beliefs are at least partially true. It could be argued that inclusivists are those that are tolerant of other religions, but still feel that truth is limited to their faith only. They favour dialogue with other religions but the result of the dialogue is pre-determined in their favour. Therefore the issue is to what extent does Sikhism fit into this definition.
2. Some would argue that Sikhism is an exclusivist tradition. Exclusivism being the belief that only one particular religion or belief system is true. The apparent exclusivism of the khalsa might be used to support this argument.
3. It can be argued that the Guru Granth Sahib is an excellent example of religious inclusivism, pluralism and inter-faith dialogue. It contains hymns from both Hindu and Muslim traditions which put together constitutes the Word.
4. In the Sikh tradition Guru Nanak had dialogue with holy men from different religions on his preaching journeys with a view to understanding and appreciating the other religions and their beliefs and practices.
5. The Sikh Gurus were engaged in dialogue and in building harmonious and loving inter-religious relations. The lives of the Sikh spiritual teachers, the message of the Sikh scripture, and Sikh tradition and history seem to support the argument that Sikhism is a pluralistic tradition.
6. It can be argued that Sikhism is clearly an inclusivist tradition as Sikhs as a rule, do not pursue people to convert them to the Sikh faith. Sikhs do not pursue people to convert them to Sikhism, but do give information about Sikhism to anyone who asks for it. If someone is inspired, and wants to become a Sikh, they are welcome to become a part of Sikhism.

Key questions that may arise could be:

1. To what extent does the answer depend on the definition of inclusivism?
2. Can a religion be completely inclusivist?
3. What is the difference between exclusivism and pluralism?
4. To what extent is the example of the Gurus inclusivist or exclusivist?
5. Is there a difference between Sikh teaching and practice?

Possible conclusions to some arguments put forward could be:

- Sikhism is clearly an inclusivist tradition.
- Sikhism is an exclusivist tradition.
- However many Sikhs would reject the notion of inclusivism and exclusivism and maintain that Sikhism is a pluralistic tradition. Pluralism being the acceptance of diverse religious belief systems co-existing in society.

**The first bullet point is to consider the effectiveness of Sikh responses to the challenges of science.**

The following six points may be used as a starting point in developing a suitable argument:

1. For the majority of Sikhs today, the questions that modern science might raise in connection with their religious outlook on life are not a key concern. They believe that Sikh teachings do not disagree with science as it does not conflict with Sikh scriptures or beliefs. Sikhs believe that science and religion complement each other in that they represent the two main aspects of human existence, the material and spiritual.
2. Sikhs believe that the laws of nature are a manifestation of the Divine Hukam, and a source of awe and wonder (vismaad). For a Sikh, any new discovery made by science is a celebration of the marvels of God and his creation, an affirmation of His Glory.
3. As Sikh teachings mention little about how Waheguru created the universe and how life developed on Earth, it is quite possible for evolution to be a part of Sikh thought. However, Sikhs believe that Waheguru cares for all living things and is in charge of the birth, life and death of everything. Evolution would only be accepted as compatible with Sikhism if Waheguru was in complete control of the process.
4. Sikhs believe that God is intrinsic in the whole of creation and therefore cannot be divorced from scientific knowledge and discoveries.
5. The Guru Granth Sahib is not a science text book. Its aim is to enlighten spiritually, not give scientific explanations. Interpretation of the Guru Granth Sahib is sometimes adapted to science and not science to the Guru Granth Sahib.
6. Science does not involve God in its teaching on creation and evolution, whereas Sikhism is based on the concept of God. Therefore, it could be argued that it is a challenge to God's very existence.

Key questions that may arise could be:

1. Does science pose a challenge to the Sikh belief that God created the universe and everything in it?
2. How have some Sikhs responded to Darwin's theory of evolution?
3. How can science and Sikhism complement each other?
4. Why do some Sikhs view science as a challenge to God's existence?
5. Should religion be adapted to fit with scientific views or scientific views adapted to fit in with religion?

Possible conclusions to some arguments put forward could be:

- Science doesn't actually pose any challenge to Sikhism at all, thus negating the issue under question.
- Science does pose some challenge to Sikhism especially in reference to the existence of God.
- The very fact that Sikh beliefs about life still retain their relevance in contemporary society suggests that Sikhism has been successful in meeting the challenges posed by science.

### Theme 3: Significant social and historical developments in religious thought

Sikhism Theme 3 DEF considers six starting points for evaluation focus.

**The second bullet point is to consider the possibility of assimilation into a secular society for Sikhs in Britain.**

The following six points may be used as a starting point in developing a suitable argument:

1. It could be argued that Sikhs have already integrated well into British society, whilst at the same time maintaining their identity. "Indicators of Sikhs full integration into UK society include high levels of educational attainment, their substantial numbers in professions such as law, medicine, accountancy and their election as mayors and members of Parliament" - British Sikh Report 2013.
2. Sikhs have already assimilated well into British culture, with the establishment of over 200 gurdwaras. The gurdwara has developed as a social centre within the community and helped preserve Sikh traditions.
3. Some would disagree with this view. Britain has seen a rise in intercommunal and racial tension and prejudice and discrimination are on the rise.
4. Adopting a more secular approach, e.g. in terms of dress and not insisting on wearing the 5Ks, would make assimilation easier and lessen any racial or religious prejudice and discrimination.
5. Some would argue that focusing on a Punjabi culture is a barrier to assimilation since it creates an ethnic religion that stands apart from British society. They would argue that links with Punjabi culture need to be severed as Sikhism in Britain and assimilation into British society is restricted by its Punjabi ties.
6. Some Sikhs could be tempted to turn their backs on Britain if forced to assimilate into a more secular society, and turn their attention to opportunities emerging elsewhere, e.g. the Pacific region.

Key questions that may arise could be:

1. Can it be argued that assimilation into a secular society is a problem for Sikhism?
2. Is the establishment of hundreds of gurdwaras valid evidence in support of assimilation?
3. Does assimilation necessarily mean a loss of identity?
4. To what extent are the outward signs of Sikhism a barrier to assimilation?
5. Is it possible to measure the degree to which Sikhism has assimilated into British secular society?

Possible conclusions to some arguments put forward could be:

- Sikhism has successfully assimilated into British secular society.
- Assimilation is not possible as it would mean a loss of identity.
- Assimilation is possible to some extent and depends on adapting to the needs of British secular society.



### Theme 3: Significant social and historical developments in religious thought

Sikhism Theme 3 DEF considers six starting points for evaluation focus.

**The third bullet point is to consider whether Sikh responses to the challenges of secularisation are effective.**

The following six points may be used as a starting point in developing a suitable argument:

1. 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.
2. 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.
3. 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.
4. Some may argue that by living in a secular society faiths are encouraged to work alongside one another in interfaith work.
5. 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.
6. 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.

Key questions that may arise could be:

1. Is secularisation a problem for Sikhism?
2. What evidence is there to suggest that secularisation has led to a growth in a more aggressive fundamental form of Sikhism?
3. How has secularisation led to more inter-faith projects and are they effective?
4. What evidence is there of the continuing vitality of Sikhism?
5. Should we differentiate between personal and institutional religion in the context of secularisation?

Possible conclusions to some arguments put forward could be:

- Secularisation poses no real problems for Sikhism due to the nature of the religion.
- Sikhism continues to flourish in a secular society.
- Sikh efforts to respond to secularisation have been ineffective and have led to a loss of identity.



### Theme 3: Significant social and historical developments in religious thought

Sikhism Theme 3 DEF considers six starting points for evaluation focus.

**The fourth bullet point is to consider the extent to which the distribution of the Sikh population in Britain has hampered its development.**

The following six points may be used as a starting point in developing a suitable argument:

1. Sikh and other Indian traders came to Britain between the wars. Many belonged to the Bhatra jati. They would arrive at ports such as Cardiff or Portsmouth and set up base in rented rooms, buy domestic items and go from door to door with their cases. Other Sikhs worked in open air markets. Sikh communities therefore tended to focus on certain cities. It could be argued that this hampered its development in more rural areas.
2. Sikhs were economic migrants who chose to come to Britain because they were British. They went to the traditional industrial areas such as Lancashire and the East and West midlands. They went where they were needed. This led to demographic inequality in the context of the Sikh population of the UK.
3. Real settlement in Britain began in the late 1950s with the arrival of economic migrants from the Punjab. A decade later came migration from East Africa. Although the Sikh population in Britain is the largest outside India it is concentrated in a few areas.
4. The Network of Sikh Organisations (NSO) is a registered charity that links more than 130 UK gurdwaras and other UK Sikh organisations in active cooperation to enhance the image and understanding of Sikhism in the UK. The Network of Sikh Organisations is a loose linking of gurdwaras and other Sikh bodies to facilitate the development of common approaches to spiritual and secular life. The Network also assists in developing a co-ordinated approach to making young Sikhs aware of the richness of their heritage, promoting interfaith dialogue and an understanding of the Sikh way of life in the wider community.
5. Due to the nature of the distribution of the Sikh population in the UK, many people do not come into contact with a Sikh community which has led to ignorance of the Sikh religion is what often lies behind many prejudices.
6. However many would point to the growth and success of Sikhism in the UK since its fairly recent beginnings and how well Sikhs have integrated themselves into the local community- not just through business, but also through charity work and the hospitable nature of the local Sikh Temple.

Key questions that may arise could be:

1. What evidence could be used to suggest that Sikhism only thrives in certain areas and that it is not truly an UK wide religion?
2. Can it be argued successfully that the demographic spread of the Sikh population has hampered its development?
3. To what extent has the NSO succeeded in bringing Sikh communities together?
4. What evidence is there to suggest that the distribution of the Sikh population has led to prejudice against Sikhism?
5. To what extent does the growth of Sikhism in the UK show that the distribution of the Sikh population has not hampered its success?

Possible conclusions to some arguments put forward could be:

- The distribution of the Sikh population in Britain has hampered its development.
- The growth and vitality of the Sikh population in Britain shows that its success has not been hampered by the distribution of its population.
- It could be argued that the distribution of the Sikh population in Britain has hampered its development to some extent.

### Theme 3: Significant social and historical developments in religious thought

Sikhism Theme 3 DEF considers six starting points for evaluation focus.

**The fifth bullet point is to consider the relationship between miri and piri in Sikh daily life.**

The following six points may be used as a starting point in developing a suitable argument:

1. These are important concepts in Sikhism indicate and explain the relationship between temporal and spiritual aspects of life. They represent the materialistic concept of human existence and the spiritual aspect of the human soul. They represent the two important aspects of life – a basic principle which has influenced Sikh thought and governed Sikh social structures, political behaviour, leadership and communal organisations. Some Sikhs would argue that the spiritual is more important than the temporal and that the temporal is an expression of the spiritual.
2. Sikhs now refer less to miri and piri and more to deg and tegh. • Degh means 'large cooking pot' and 'tegh' sword or kirpan – fulfilling the material needs of the community and defending the rights of the people.
3. Langar is an important aspect of deg providing for the materialistic needs of the community. The right to follow your chosen religion is an aspect of tegh.
4. Sikhs consider miri and piri to be important aspects of human endeavour and relevant to the needs of all human beings, whether they are Sikhs or non-Sikhs.
5. Sikhs have an obligation to challenge religious coercion, political tyranny, social oppression and to ensure a peaceful and prosperous co-existence, not only for Sikhs but society as a whole.
6. The concepts epitomise the householder ideal in Sikhism in terms of social responsibility and remind the Sikh community that it should never shirk its socio-political responsibilities. In this context it could be argued that miri is more important than piri.

Key questions that may arise could be:

1. How have miri and piri influence Sikh social structures?
2. Which is the most influential in Sikh life miri or piri?
3. Is it a danger that socio-political responsibilities can take precedence over spiritual matters?
4. How can the langar be a symbol of the importance of the relationship between miri and piri in Sikh daily life?
5. Is it possible for the material and spiritual to co-exist in Sikh daily life in the 21st century?

Possible conclusions to some arguments put forward could be:

- Miri and piri both strongly influence every aspect of Sikh daily life.
- Miri has by far the greatest influence on Sikh daily life.
- Piri is by far the most important and miri is an expression of the spiritual values of Sikhism.

### Theme 3: Significant social and historical developments in religious thought

Sikhism Theme 3 DEF considers six starting points for evaluation focus.

**The sixth bullet point is to consider the relevance and practicality of Sikh attitudes to defending the poor and oppressed in today's world.**

The following six points may be used as a starting point in developing a suitable argument:

1. The Guru Granth Sahib shows the path of truthful living in the Lord's Will (Hukam). It is the path of a working householder, who shares his earnings with those who are less well off.
2. Poverty and how to deal with it through sharing (wand shakna) becomes one of the main themes of the Sikh way of life. Yet, whilst poverty is accepted as a human condition with which human beings may be afflicted through no fault of their own, Sikhism teaches constant effort to earn a living and to share with those who are not doing well. There is recognition in Sikhism that poverty has many causes, some within and some without human control, but all in God's design (kalla).
3. Living on charity is not the Sikh way. Sharing is through the social system symbolised by the Langar at Gurdwaras. It is a pointer to the establishment of a community-wide system for sharing with, and giving shelter to, those in need. Even giving and receiving of so called "charity" must not detract from human dignity. It must be given and accepted in humility, without any sense of pride (haomai) in the giver, or loss of personal dignity in the receiver.
4. Humility in bearing suffering is one response to oppression. This entails the ability to understand suffering as part of the human condition, and the enactment of the divine will. This also entails a powerlessness on behalf of those who suffer to surmount the oppression.
5. Standing up for one's rights and those of the oppressed is another choice that also corresponds with Sikh notions of honour (pat) and justice (nian).
6. Sikh history is full of stories of martyrs for the faith who were steadfast in their opposition to oppression

Key questions that may arise could be:

1. To what extent is the path of the householder practical in today's world?
2. Is there conflict in the Sikh view of poverty between giving on the one hand and expecting people to make a constant effort to make a living on the other?
3. Is the Sikh understanding of charity relevant today?
4. Can suffering oppression be called a valid response to it?
5. What are the implications of the Sikh notions of pat and nian in response to oppression?

Possible conclusions to some arguments put forward could be:

- Sikh responses to the poor and oppressed are both relevant and practical.
- Sikh responses are relevant, but are not practical in today's world.
- Some aspects of the Sikh response are relevant and practical.

## Theme 4: Religious practices that shape religious identity

Sikhism Theme 4 DEF considers six starting points for evaluation focus.

**The first bullet point is to consider the effectiveness of the Rahit Maryada or Rahit Namas as a guide to Sikh living.**

The following six points may be used as a starting point in developing a suitable argument:

1. The Rahit Maryada provides the key principles for a code of conduct which defines Sikhs from non-Sikhs. It also provides Sikhs with a sense of security and unity.
2. It provides clear guidelines about how practices should be organised in the gurdwara. It is a code of discipline that unites Sikhs everywhere and safeguards key Sikh beliefs and values.
3. Rahit Maryada states that 'Sikhs must in no way give offence to other faiths'. It also stresses the importance of equality in gender and caste.
4. It gives guidance on reading the Adi Granth; Karah Prashad; birth - Janam Sanskar; marriage – Anand Sanskar; death – Mirtik Sanskar and sewa. The cohesion of the Panth and the general uniformity of Sikh practice worldwide owes much to the effectiveness of the Rahit Maryada.
5. The Sikh code of conduct Rahit Maryada and Rahit Namas is rooted in spiritual goals and principles which are not accepted or respected by some Sikhs who live in a secular society, e.g. constant studying of scripture and meditating upon God; rejection of alcohol; living a life of faith. Sikhs tend to adapt and amend lifestyle to fit in with the cultural context they are living in.
6. It is difficult for Sikhs to justify outward signs of their religion in Western culture as this can lead to religious intolerance and discrimination. Some see the outward signs of the ethics of Rahit Maryada and Rahit Namas as a barrier to integration into Western society.

Key questions that may arise could be:

1. To what extent does the Rahit Maryada express and protect Sikh identity?
2. Do all gurdwaras follow the same practices?
3. What is the influence of the Rahit Maryada and Rahit Namas on Sikh lifestyle?
4. Is the Rahit Maryada and Rahit Namas relevant to Sikhs in the 21<sup>st</sup> century?
5. In what ways could the Rahit Maryada and Rahit Namas be a barrier to integration into Western society?

Possible conclusions to some arguments put forward could be:

- The Rahit Maryada and Rahit Namas provide effective guidance for Sikh living.
- The Rahit Maryada and Rahit Namas are mainly irrelevant to Sikh life today.
- The Rahit Maryada and Rahit Namas provide some guidance for Sikh living today but need to be adapted and considered within the context of modern society.

**The second bullet point is to consider the the relative importance of the Rahit Maryada in the context of Sikh identity.**

The following six points may be used as a starting point in developing a suitable argument:

1. The Rahit Maryada contains set rules and ways for the ideal life in Sikhism which determine Sikh beliefs and practices. It extends its meaning to life discipline. It meets the principles for ethical, moral and spiritual life. It is a code which tells the Sikh followers how to live and how not to live.
2. In diaspora Sikhism adapts and amends lifestyle to fit in with the cultural context they are living in. The Rahit Maryada is rooted in Punjabi life and culture and many Sikhs, especially the young, feel that it is not relevant to modern life in places such as Britain.
3. Following the Sikh code of conduct does not depend on the surrounding society and its values. Sikh code of conduct is expressed and supported within their own community. Sikh code of conduct provides social, cultural, religious and spiritual precepts for governance of Khalsa corporate life. Sikh faith is established on observance of the principles and rules formulated by the Sikh Gurus.
4. There is a greater need to be committed to creating a unified and ethical community in the diaspora situation. The Rahit Maryada provides this guidance.
5. The Rahit Maryada is needed even more in 21st century to guide young Sikhs in particular as so many conflicting ideologies and value systems prevailing both in the changing society of India and the wider world.
6. The importance of outward signs such as turban and 5 Ks in expressing Sikh identity which could be argued as more important expressions of Sikh identity.

Key questions that may arise could be:

1. To what extent do the rules of the Rahit Maryada define Sikh identity?
2. In what ways is the Sikh identity expressed in the Rahit Maryada irrelevant to young Sikhs today?
3. Can it be claimed that there is one Sikh identity?
4. What are some of the reasons for arguing that the Rahit Maryada is more important in diaspora situations?
5. Are other forms of expressing identity more important and relevant than the Rahit Maryada?

Possible conclusions to some arguments put forward could be:

- The Rahit Maryada is extremely important in expressing and safeguarding Sikh identity.
- The Rahit Maryada has little relevance in terms of identity for young Sikhs today.
- There are other more important expressions of Sikh identity than the Rahit Maryada.

## Theme 4: Religious practices that shape religious identity

Sikhism Theme 4 DEF considers six starting points for evaluation focus.

**The third bullet point is to consider the practice of Naam Japo as evidence of a personal mystical union with God.**

The following six points may be used as a starting point in developing a suitable argument:

1. The term Naam refers to the various names given to God as used by the Sikhs. Naam Japo refers to the meditation, vocal singing of Shabads or hymns, from the Sri Guru Granth Sahib or the chanting of the various Names of God, specifically the chanting of the word Waheguru, which means Wonderful Lord. This act of meditation, singing and chanting is a one of three main pillars of Sikhism.
2. This concept is also permeated in the Sri Guru Granth Sahib as 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 tranquillity into the mind.
3. While contemplating God's names a devotee is able to get nām, the divine connection with God. Nām is able to fulfill all desires and cleanse the mind of its impurities distress. Through Nām the devotees are able to harness godly qualities.
4. There are other more practical ways of attaining a personal mystical union with God such as chanting or reciting the mul Mantra and Japji.
5. It can be argued that Naam Japo is only one step to a mystical union with God and must be complemented by Kirat Karo which means to earn an honest, pure and dedicated living by exercising one's God-given skills, abilities, talents and hard labour for the benefit and improvement of the individual, their family and society at large.
6. Vand Chakko means to share what you have and to consume it together as a community. This could be wealth, food, etc. The term is also used to mean to share ones wealth with others in the community, to give to charity, to distribute in Langar and to generally help others in the community who need help. A Sikh is expected to contribute a portion of their wealth/income to people in need or to a worthy cause. This could also be argued to be essential in conjunction with the two other pillars of Sikhism to attain a mystical union with God.

Key questions that may arise could be:

1. Does Naam Japo on its own offer the means by which to achieve personal mystical union with God in Sikhism?
2. What evidence from Sikhism can be used to support the claim that mystical union is possible?
3. Should Naam Japo be considered in the context of the two other pillars of Sikhism?
4. Is the practice of Naam Japo a meaningful practice which leads to a mystical union with God or just a devotional part of Gurdwara worship?
5. Is it possible to have personal mystical union through using God-given skills to create wealth and sharing it with the less fortunate?

Possible conclusions to some arguments put forward could be:

- It is possible to achieve a personal mystical union with God in Sikhism through the practice of Naam Japo.
- Personal mystical union with God is not possible simply by following Naam Japo.
- Naam Japo cannot be regarded as evidence that a personal mystical union with God is possible.

## Theme 4: Religious practices that shape religious identity

Sikhism Theme 4 DEF considers six starting points for evaluation focus.

**The fourth bullet point is to consider the relative importance of the five stages of spiritual liberation.**

The following six points may be used as a starting point in developing a suitable argument:

1. They are important because Guru Nanak has mentioned five stages of spiritual growth in the Japji. They are five stages which Sikhs need to attain in order to reach spiritual liberation and therefore they are all essential and as such as important as each other.
2. The first stage is in the region of duty - Dharam Khand – here a person acts and reaps the consequences. “The earth exists for dharma to be practised.” A person will be judged according to their moral response. This could be argued to be the most important as it influences a Sikh’s actions and lifestyle.
3. Those who carry out their duties sincerely and honestly, enter the second region - the region of knowledge - Gian Khand. Here devotees may obtain a knowledge of God and the Universe. They learn of their own human limitations, the omnipotence of God and the vastness of His creation. They may then realize that there is some further purpose behind God’s creation. Some would argue that this is the most important as knowledge of God is an important aim in Sikhism.
4. They then enter the third stage - the region of effort - Saram Khand - here his mind and understanding are purified. They endeavour to act according to the instructions of the Guru Granth Sahib. Many would argue that purity of mind is the most important as it influences all aspects of Sikh spiritual life.
5. Such efforts may lead them to the next region - the region of grace - Karam Khand; here the selfless devotee may find divine grace and develop spiritual power. Some could argue that this stage is the most important as developing spiritual power is important in attaining a mystical union with God.
6. Finally, only with God’s grace may they enter the next stage - the region of truth - Sach Khand - where they may unite with God. To many Sikhs this is without doubt the most important as it is the goal of a Sikh’s life.

Key questions that may arise could be:

1. Can it be argued that actions are more important than words and that the first stage represents this and also the beginning of the journey?
2. Is there anything more important in Sikhism than knowledge of God?
3. To what extent is it possible to argue that living according to the Guru Granth Sahib is the most important requirement of Sikh life?
4. Is the final stage a realisation of a Sikh’s aim in life and therefore has to be the most important?
5. Can stages of a journey be compared to each other in terms of importance?

Possible conclusions to some arguments put forward could be:

- The first stage is the most important since it is the beginning of the journey.
- The final stage is the most important as it is the attainment of a Sikh’s goal in life.
- They are all dependent on each other and therefore as important as each other.



## Theme 4: Religious practices that shape religious identity

Sikhism Theme 4 DEF considers six starting points for evaluation focus.

**The fifth bullet point is to consider the effectiveness of Sikh ethical teachings you have studied as a guide for living for Sikhs today**

The following six points may be used as a starting point in developing a suitable argument:

1. The role of the Rahit Maryada as the rules for the Khalsa set down by Guru Gobind Singh.
2. Not all Sikhs belong to the Khalsa, so the Rahit Maryada may not apply at all.
3. Sikh texts were written some time ago, and cannot anticipate every moral dilemma.
4. Sikhs also see a role for personal conscience, making solving some moral problems a personal and complex matter.
5. A vast range of subjects are covered by the Rahit Maryada and Rahit Namas which are relevant in many aspects of Sikh life.
6. The role of the Guru Granth Sahib in solving moral problems.

Key questions that may arise could be:

1. To what extent do the rules of the Khalsa provide effective guidance for Sikhs today?
2. What reasons are given amongst those who aren't convinced that Sikh ethical teachings is able to provide a reliable guide for living for Sikhs today?
3. How far is it possible for texts written some time ago to be relevant today when making ethical decisions about technological advances in the world of medicine?
4. To what extent are ethical decisions subjective and to what extent are they influenced by historical and social influences?
5. How can the effectiveness, or otherwise, of Sikhs ethical teaching be measured?

Possible conclusions to some arguments put forward could be:

- Sikhism provides a sound basis through which sound ethical guidelines can be formulated.
- Advances in medical science have brought about issues and situations which would never have been thought possible at the time of composition of Sikh texts.
- The very fact that Sikh ethical teaching is being applied in so many new, contemporary situations indicates its effectiveness in the modern world.

## Theme 4: Religious practices that shape religious identity

Sikhism Theme 4 DEF considers six starting points for evaluation focus.

**The sixth bullet point is to consider the extent to which IVF is compatible with Sikh teaching.**

The following six points may be used as a starting point in developing a suitable argument:

1. Many Sikhs believe that all life is sacred because it is given by God. Therefore if a couple are having difficulties with infertility many Sikhs interpret it as being the will of God and may be considered as God's way of showing that they are not meant to have children.
2. Most Sikhs greatly value having children. All Sikhs are expected to have a family, and technology can be used to bring this about. If a couple are having difficulties with infertility this causes suffering and therefore many Sikhs would support a married couple in the use of fertility treatments such as IVF.
3. It is common in IVF for more than one embryo to be produced, and for some to be left over when pregnancy has been achieved. Embryos can be frozen for use at a later date by the couple. In Sikh communities, the duty to have a family outweighs the concerns about the potential life of the embryos that are discarded. Sikhs permit research on spare embryos because it has the potential to develop knowledge that could help humankind.
4. Many Sikhs also believe that the destruction of embryos is wrong because they believe that life is present from the moment of conception. This is based on the teachings of the Japji Sahib and they would argue that an undeveloped life still has a soul given by God and for that reason should be respected and not destroyed. This is described in the Japji Sahib – 'By Divine Law are beings created. Others by his Law are whistled around in cycles of births and deaths.'
5. Some Sikhs do not agree with IVF as they see it as an unnatural abuse of creative power which is supposed to belong to God only.
6. Some Sikhs believe that the teachings of the Gurus could not have included modern technologies but that they would have been accepted in some cases especially if they were to cure diseases and help the disadvantaged. Therefore, doctors who engage in such treatments are demonstrating sewa.

Key questions that may arise could be:

1. Are the arguments in favour of IVF more cultural/social than religious?
2. Is 'sanctity of life' a valid objection to IVF?
3. What is the nature of the Sikh objections that have been raised in connection with this issue?
4. How far is it acceptable to prohibit certain treatments entirely on an interpretation of God's will?
5. To what extent is sewa a valid argument in this context?

Possible conclusions to some arguments put forward could be:

- IVF is compatible with Sikh teaching.
- Not all Sikhs agree that IVF can be seen as compatible with Sikh teaching.
- As new medical techniques emerge, it is conceivable that the debate will continue on what is permissible for Sikhs.