
AS

RELIGIOUS STUDIES

Component 2: Study of Religion

2D Islam

Report on the Examination

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General comments

There were many well-informed, relevant, answers that showed both an excellent grasp of the material studied and good examination technique. There were some full-mark answers to all of the questions set and some excellent scripts. There was very little evidence that answers were rushed and most answers were of a good length, although a little shorter than expected: many answers of around 300 words achieved the highest levels of the mark scheme. This was very impressive for the first examination of a new specification when teachers, as well as students, were unfamiliar with the demands.

Where there were weaknesses, they were often those commonly seen in work produced under examination conditions: a failure to focus on the question; a lack of support for, or development of, points made, and a failure to engage in debate in AO2 answers. Some AO2 answers were limited to a maximum of Level 2 because they only presented and explained one point of view and did not in any way recognise that others would disagree with the reasoning and the view expressed.

There was some impressive use of technical terms and specialist vocabulary; however, there was also some confusion when terms were used without any apparent understanding of their meaning.

Question 01

01.1 Explain why there are different Muslim beliefs about the authority of hadiths and why the differences between them are significant.

There were some excellent answers, and most tackled both parts of the question. Many were aware of debates within Islam about the reliability of the hadith and of the different views of Sunni and Shi'a Islam. Many could illustrate the significance of the differences, for example, with reference to different ways of practising prayer. In contrast, some simply explained what hadith were and why they were important. Such answers ignored the thrust of the question. Some very good answers used one or more examples of hadiths and, where these were well chosen, they illustrated many of the points being made. Many answers were better informed about why the different views about the authority of hadiths mattered than about why there were different views about the authority of hadith.

01.2 'From a Muslim point of view, God cannot be clearly described.' Assess this view.

There were some excellent answers which made very good use of the material specified for study related to the Names of God and to anthropomorphic descriptions of God in the Qur'an. Many answers were rather more general and some simply explained a point of view rather than entering a debate. The view that God inspires understanding of his Names in those who recite them was used by some to argue that God can be clearly described. A very small number of responses took a narrow understanding of description to refer to what God looks like, this was acceptable but unnecessary.

Question 02**02.1 Explain why good moral conduct is important in Islam.**

There were some excellent answers that remained focused on the question throughout. The specification requires students to know about the following in relation to the importance of good moral conduct: the duty of obedience to God and the Prophet and greater Jihad. Some limited their answer to these points, others did not mention them and others also drew on wider ideas, especially those related to reward and punishment in the afterlife: each of these approaches was acceptable. Some explained at great length what good moral conduct is and the mark scheme allowed some reward for this, but the question did not specifically require this information and could have been answered without it.

02.2 ‘Hajj is becoming less important in Islam today.’ Assess this view.

There were some excellent answers and some students focused clearly on the importance of Hajj today, others made more general comments with little reference to present practice. Most considered how far Hajj is a realistic prospect, and therefore a duty, for Muslims today. Some considered why the lessons of Hajj may be particularly relevant within Islam today, given what is happening in the Muslim world. Some considered the way that Hajj is managed by the Saudi authorities, but this material did not always relate to the importance of Hajj. A few commented on the possibility of virtual hajj as a replacement for the ‘real thing’.

Use of statistics

Statistics used in this report may be taken from incomplete processing data. However, this data still gives a true account on how students have performed for each question.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

Grade boundaries and cumulative percentage grades are available on the [Results Statistics](#) page of the AQA Website.