
GCSE

RELIGIOUS STUDIES B

Paper 2X Perspectives on faith (Islam)

Report on the Examination

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General Comments

It was pleasing to see that many students had been well prepared for this new examination. There was a full range in standard of performance.

Although many students made a genuine attempt to answer all questions and to develop answers worth 4, 5 and 12 marks, many scripts contained questions that were not attempted, particularly in the practices section of the paper. It is essential that students study and revise every part of the specification. It may also have been that some students ran out of time. One weakness in the 4 and 5 mark answers was that some students forgot the requirement to explain two beliefs or ways. Many answers consisted of one long paragraph, though it was often possible to find and credit two beliefs etc. It was, however, pleasing to see that many students, whatever their ability, took note of the guidance given as part of the 12 mark questions and answered them at length.

Three marks were available for Spelling, Punctuation and Grammar (SPaG) in each of the 12 mark questions and most students reached at least intermediate performance level. Although handwriting does not feature in the criteria for assessment of SPaG, where words are ill-formed, it is very difficult to be sure about the accuracy for spelling. Handwriting was an issue in a number of scripts.

Islam: Beliefs

Question 01.1

Most students answered this correctly.

Question 01.2

Only just over a third of responses to this question gained both marks, and some of those who gained one of the marks, usually for Tawhid (or an acceptable paraphrase), may well have made a fortunate guess. Many gave two of the Five Pillars. It was, however, pleasing to see that students had been well trained in answering these questions. Most responses consisted of two words or very short phrases.

Question 01.3

A few accurate and developed answers did not refer to Christianity. These answers therefore could only achieve three marks. Most, however, did take note of the instruction, and many gained maximum marks. Some stated that both religions believe that God is one, developing this with reference to the sources of that belief, eg the Qur'an and the Nicene Creed, or referring to attributes such as omnipotence.

Question 01.4

Many responses stated that the Qur'an was the highest source of authority since it contained teachings that came directly from Allah via Jibril. Many answers also explained that for Muslims, the Qur'an alone is infallible as it remains in its original form. A few students appeared to misread the question, thinking that it was asking about beliefs found in the Qur'an. Whilst credit could be given where a connection was made to beliefs about the Qur'an, it is essential that questions are read carefully and that answers are fully focused on them.

Question 01.5

It appeared that some students did not think carefully about what the question was asking and evaluated the different forms that obedience to Allah could take or wrote about faith rather than obedience. Nevertheless, many responses made a genuine attempt to answer the question that was set. Muslim beliefs about the afterlife were generally well known. As alternative views, there were many considerations of teaching about predestination and its relationship to free will, although there was some muddling of Sunni and Shi'a understandings of this. Other answers referred to obedience arising out of gratitude for the gift of life or out of respect for God's omnipotence etc. Yet others said that Muslims obeyed God's will simply because it was the right thing to do. A number of responses considered the role that might be played by upbringing in a devout Muslim home. Although there were some almost entirely descriptive approaches, an especially pleasing feature of many answers was the attempt at evaluation. Some students, for instance, suggested that to obey God in order to be rewarded with Paradise was selfish and that Allah would see through it. Other responses weighed up the arguments on both sides before coming to the conclusion that ultimately beliefs about Akhirah as revealed in the Qur'an lay at the root of submission to Allah's will.

Islam: Practices**Question 02.1**

The vast majority of students selected the correct answer.

Question 02.2

This question was not well answered, with just over half of responses receiving any credit at all. Many responses demonstrated no understanding of the phrase 'lesser jihad'. There was some confusion with greater jihad. Most of the correct responses referred to the defence of Islam, the necessity for war to be legitimised by a religious authority or to the requirement to avoid harm to the innocent.

Question 02.3

Where this concept was known and understood, many responses referred to greater jihad as an inner struggle and then applied it to the effort made to overcome temptation. Other responses made reference to developing a deeper relationship with God through practice of the Five Pillars. Many responses took note of the need to explain the influence of the belief on the lives of Muslims, with just under two fifths gaining full marks.

Question 02.4

This was well answered by those students who did not make the mistake of confusing sawm with salah or zakat. There were many appropriate references to Qur'anic teachings.

Question 02.5

Those students who knew and understood the significance of Id-ul-Fitr and at least one of the other festivals often reached the highest level of the mark scheme. Some of the strongest responses showed awareness of the ways in which Muslims not on hajj are nevertheless able to reflect the spirit of the Id-ul-Adha. Comments made about the significance of that festival were particularly insightful. Many responses also commented on the differing reasons for Sunni and Shi'a observance of Ashura. Some referred to the custom of blood donation as an alternative to

traditional practice. Some also supported arguments for its significance with reference to processions in London. However, only just over a third of students achieved a mark higher than Level 2. A significant number of answers muddled the festivals, which limited the marks that could be awarded. Other answers showed sound knowledge of Id-ul-Adha, but very little awareness of Id-ul-Fitr. The most that many responses said was that Id-u-Fitr marked the end of Ramadan. A few attempted to explain its significance in relation to thanksgiving for the strength received from Allah through the challenging month of fasting. A number of students described the nature of the celebration but few explained its importance for families and the Muslim community. Many responses focused on the importance of Ramadan, repeating what had been said in answer to the previous question.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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