



A-LEVEL

RELIGIOUS STUDIES

7062/2D – Study of religion and dialogues: Islam
Report on the Examination

7062
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General comments

There were some outstanding scripts and there were some full mark answers to every question. Few, if any, appeared to have difficulty completing the paper in the time available, although it was obvious that the handwriting deteriorated in the final question attempted on a number of scripts. There were some scripts where handwriting was a major issue, but on the whole the answers were legible. As is always the case under examination conditions, attention to the exact wording of the question varied considerably so answers were more or less relevant accordingly. This was particularly true, on some scripts, for AO2 questions, where some candidates lost sight of the issue they were supposed to be evaluating. Many candidates used technical terms accurately and effectively, but there were some errors which led to considerable confusion in some answers. The new-style dialogue questions appeared to cause no particular problems for most. The way these questions were approached varied considerably and some of those strategies were much more successful than others as will be evident from the comments below.

Section A: Study of Islam

Question 1

Part 01.1

There were some excellent answers and these often included the material specified for study for this topic: the significance of 'The Merciful' and 'The Compassionate' as Names of God, and anthropomorphic descriptions of God with reference to the hand and face of God. Other answers were much more vague; some contrasted God as personal with God as public for example. The best answers considered how these personal aspects could be understood in the light of beliefs about God's transcendence, but some focused on the Oneness of God and God's transcendence far more than on the personal aspects of God as required.

Part 01.2

There were some excellent answers that considered if the claim that there is 'little' agreement matched the evidence, or whether it would be more accurate to claim that there is no agreement or general agreement. However, other answers were mostly summaries of a wide range of different Muslim beliefs and, while such answers were often well-informed, they did not always address the issue. Some simply completed their summary with a statement such as 'this shows there is little agreement', others did not actually state a point of view. The maximum reward possible for an answer which simply explains reasons / presents evidence to support one point of view is Level 2. An answer which does not state a point of view can achieve a maximum of Level 1, which gives credit for awareness of relevant information but recognises that the response has demonstrated no AO2 skills.

Question 2

Part 02.1

There were excellent answers which clearly focused on the reasons why there are different views and supported the ideas with evidence and examples. There were also many answers that described different views, but paid little, or no, attention to the reasons for them, and that limited the marks that could be awarded. Some of the explanations of those different views were very

detailed, and the answers would have taken a good while to write, but unless the answer focused on the question asked it could not be highly rewarded.

Part 02.2

There were some outstanding answers to this question and many were clearly very well informed about Muslim perspectives on the two issues, although some had relatively little to say about attitudes to transgender people. Some weaker answers tended to summarise arguments for the view stated, followed by arguments against, without any critical analysis, comment or evaluation, beyond choosing to ‘agree’ or ‘disagree’ at the end of the response. Such answers could only be awarded a maximum of Level 3. There were a number of answers that were wholly one-sided and did nothing but explain reasons in support of the view. Such answers could only achieve a maximum of Level 2.

Dialogues

There were many excellent answers to these questions. Some wrote separate AO1 and AO2 sections. This was a perfectly valid approach but it resulted in quite a lot of repetition, because some of the information was then needed as evidence for the AO2 section. Also, the AO1 material, when presented separately, tended to be rather general and broader than required and was not always focused enough to be useful for AO2. Some took a ‘write all you know approach’, and did not select what was relevant to the issue. The better answers tended to combine AO1 and AO2. There were some signs of planning, which was often very effective. A minority of candidates did these questions first. This was another perfectly valid approach and seemed to have no impact on their ability to complete the whole paper. On the whole, weaker answers tended to have the same weaknesses as answers to the structured questions in Section A such as a failure to develop and support the AO1 content and a failure to critically analyse and evaluate the arguments presented.

Section B: The dialogue between philosophy and Islam

Question 3.1

There were some excellent answers to this question which clearly understood that as the Qur’an is regarded as revealed scripture, its authority is based on the claim that the Prophet’s religious experiences were genuine. The ways in which philosophy has challenged that claim were then discussed and evaluated with reference to the problems of subjectivity, interpretation and possible alternative natural explanations for those experiences. Swinburne’s principles of credulity and testimony were also discussed and there were references to the work of Persinger and Ramachandran. Some also approached the question by discussing how far the Prophet’s experience matched the definitions offered by, for example, Stace and James. This was also a valid approach, but generally did no more than establish that the recorded experiences could, or could not, rightly be called ‘religious’; it did not establish whether they do, or do not, have authority. A few discussed if conversion experiences could take people away from Islam and whether religious experience had greater authority for some Muslims than the Qur’an; these were valid ideas, but did not involve dialogue between Islam and philosophy so any answer that had considered only these ideas could only receive a limited reward.

Question 4.1

There were some excellent answers that basically pitched Hume’s arguments against some accounts of miracles from the Qur’an and/or from tradition. Many treated the revelation of the

Qur'an as a miracle; this was perfectly acceptable but some of the discussion that followed was quite muddled. In general the clearer answers used other examples such as the miracles of Jesus and Moses recorded in the Qur'an, so a helpful distinction between 'a miracle' and 'a religious experience' was maintained. Weaker answers merely summarised Hume's arguments against miracles and some simply rejected those arguments by saying 'it is in the Qur'an, so it must be true', which ignores different views about how the Qur'an verses may be interpreted and provides an answer that would not satisfy non-believers. There was also some good discussion of Wiles' view that the belief that God intervenes is inconsistent with the belief that God is all-powerful and all-loving or compassionate. In some answers where AO1 was treated separately there were long explanations of different meanings for 'miracle' including realist and anti-realist. Much of this material was drawn from a Christian context which meant that it contributed little to a debate between Islam and philosophy, understanding of anti-realist views was also often a little confused. These explanations of 'miracle' were not always applied in the answer that followed.

Section C: The dialogue between ethics and Islam

Question 5.1

This was the more popular of the questions in this section and there were some excellent answers that were well-informed, both about the attitude to animals reflected in Aquinas' natural moral law and about Muslim attitudes. Some of the answers that presented AO1 separately began with a general introduction to natural moral law that was only partly relevant. Much was made of the method of slaughter for animals as a key difference between natural moral law and Islam, and of the need to have a just cause for the suffering or death of any animal in Islam. In general, however, it was argued that there was much in common between the two although they were shown to reach the same conclusions for different reasons. Some answers were less well-informed about debates in Islam about the use of animal organs for transplants (specifically organs from pigs). Many reported that this would be forbidden in Islam but allowed in natural moral law, whereas some Muslim scholars argue that preservation of life permits the use of such organs in the same way that starvation permits the eating of haram food.

Question 6.1

There were some very effective answers to this question. In general students were clear that Bentham would base any decision on this issue on the consequences of freedom of religious expression, in that time and in that place, and would allow or forbid it accordingly. It was then discussed whether Islam would also make its decision solely according to the consequences or whether there was a matter of principle that was more important. Some, but not all, showed a clear understanding of what freedom of religious expression could involve, some but not all dealt with this in the context of a multicultural society which is where the specification places the issue. The answer then became a debate about whether granting freedom of expression to other faiths was permissible or even required. Some good examples were used, but generally examples were lacking. The most common conclusion was that neither Bentham nor Islam would allow complete freedom but would be concerned about the consequences of limiting it too much.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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