



GCSE

RELIGIOUS STUDIES A

Paper 1 Islam

Report on the Examination

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General comments

Many students were able to write in detail and complete both papers in the time allowed for the examination and most attempted most questions. The questions enabled students at the lower end of the ability range to show their knowledge and understanding and gain credit for this while students at the higher end of the ability range wrote clear and excellent answers, often achieving maximum marks or the highest level available.

It is important that students are taught to read the questions and actually answer the question which has been set. Key vocabulary such as 'alms' and 'predestination' are part of the specification content and therefore are required to be taught. On the whole, the 'Beliefs' questions were much better answered than the 'Practices' questions. It was evident that students really wanted to demonstrate their knowledge about the Five Pillars so often included this at every opportunity.

Extra space for answers is provided at the back of the question paper/answer booklet. It is advised that students use this space to continue responses which go beyond the lines given underneath the questions, and also signal to an examiner where this space has been used.

Islam: Beliefs

Question 01.1

This question was well answered, with over three quarters of students selecting the correct answer.

Question 01.2

It appeared that students either knew the articles or they did not. The most common errors were responses naming the Five Pillars, jihad, no alcohol, no sex before marriage and references to the Sunni/Shi'a split. A few responses referred to objects – prayer mat, head scarf, tasbeeh, etc.

Question 01.3

Where students knew what predestination was, this question was well answered, although even so, many students focused on the belief rather than the influence. There were a lot of answers about Judgement and the afterlife and beliefs about the nature of God, without linking the ideas to predestination.

Question 01.4

This question was well-answered on the whole, but some students wrote general answers on beliefs about prophets without focusing on the **role**. Many referred to Ibrahim being willing to sacrifice his son and some wrote about the 12 Imams as prophets.

Question 01.5

There were some good answers to this question which were well written and included points from the mark scheme. However, many responses didn't understand the word 'authority' and interpreted it to mean 'obligation', 'statutes' or 'principles' and therefore contrasted the Qur'an with the Five Pillars, 10 obligatory acts, and so on. Use of mnemonics such as SONIC might be helpful on the Themes paper (Paper 2), but can disadvantage students in the religions papers by encouraging

them to consider non-religious views as giving their own opinion eg ‘as an atheist, myself...’. Non-religious views will not achieve credit in Paper 1.

Islam: Practices

Question 02.1

Students performed very well on this question, with well over four fifths of students selecting the correct response.

Question 02.2

This was a very open question and many students were awarded the two marks for their responses.

Question 02.3

A significant minority did not attempt this question and it would appear that some did not know the meaning of the phrase ‘giving alms’ which is in the specification. Many responses were very generic along the lines of ‘some think it is good and pleases Allah, while others disagree with it’. Several answers were of the kind ‘Some Muslims believe giving alms is wrong because it is Allah’s will that people are poor and they should not go against it’. However, those who knew the term were often able to explain two contrasting or different Muslim beliefs about the practice.

Question 02.4

Many responses were confused about which festival was which. In describing Id-ul-Fitr, there were lots of responses which included points about ‘sacrificing a sheep’ and ‘beating themselves up to remember the death of Hussain’. Students who knew ways in which Id-ul-Fitr was celebrated were often able to give sufficient detail to achieve four marks for the two ways together with a reference to Muslim teaching for a fifth mark.

Question 02.5

Around five percent of students did not attempt this question. Some students did not seem to know the term Jummah and in general, responses demonstrated little knowledge about Friday prayer. Many responses were able to gain marks on their knowledge of Salah. Others answers talked generally about the benefits of private and congregational prayers. However there were some good and excellent answers in which students evaluated the relative importance of the Friday prayer and the daily prayers and in doing so demonstrated excellent knowledge and understanding.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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