



GCSE

Religious Studies B

8063/2X Paper 2 Section A: Perspectives on Faith (Islam)

Report on the Examination

8063
June 2024

Version: 1.0

Further copies of this Report are available from aqa.org.uk

AQA retains the copyright on all its publications. However, registered schools/colleges for AQA are permitted to copy material from this booklet for their own internal use, with the following important exception: AQA cannot give permission to schools/colleges to photocopy any material that is acknowledged to a third party even for internal use within the centre.

General Comments

It was pleasing to see how effectively centres had prepared students for this examination.. Many students demonstrated solid knowledge and understanding of the key tenets of Muslim beliefs and practices. Many answers included considered and well-reasoned responses, with the best applying their knowledge to issues in a thoughtful and insightful way.

The paper remains accessible to a wide range of abilities, with many students answering the shorter-response questions correctly. Many students attempted all or almost all questions, sometimes using their knowledge creatively where they were perhaps unsure. At times, mistakes were made where students had not read the question properly or had not considered how much they might need to write for higher-tariff questions. No questions appear problematic overall, with the paper comparable with previous series.

A recurring issue is the loss of marks when students did not attribute sources of authority in questions 1.4 and 2.4. Many good students quoted correctly but lost the mark for not stating where the quotation had come from.

In questions 1.5 and 2.5, the highest-scoring responses were a pleasure to read. They moved beyond generic knowledge and addressed specific requirements with well-applied information. This showed deeper understanding and critical engagement. It is encouraging to see many students better engaging with these questions. They are attempting to evaluate and judge the arguments presented, which enables them to access higher marks. Further preparation in developing evaluative skills would enhance outcomes even further.

Spelling, punctuation, and grammar (SPaG) performance was relatively good. Many students achieved two or three marks in questions 1.5 and 2.5. Handwriting remains a concern for some students, impacting the readability of their responses. Emphasis on clear handwriting, alongside focus on SPaG, will benefit students in future examinations.

1.1

There was roughly an even split of correct and incorrect answers to 1.1. Just over half of students knew that holy books were not one of the five roots of Usul ad-Din in Shi'a Islam. Incorrect responses commonly cited justice as their answer.

1.2

1.2 was generally well answered, with around 75% of students giving two correct reasons why Muhammad is important for Muslims. Many correctly referred to points such as: he was God's Messenger, seal of the prophets (a great prophet), he saw Jibril in a vision, he received the revelations that formed the Qur'an, he founded the Ummah. Some answers referred to his teachings and practices (Sunnah). Incorrect responses commonly gave reasons why other prophets, such as Ibrahim, were important for Muslims, though these were rare overall.

1.3

In question 1.3, many students were able to correctly explain two reasons why a belief in angels influences the lives of Muslims. Over half of students achieved the full four marks, with answers

commonly including: angels as messengers of God (specifically Jibril revealing the Qur'an to Muhammad), the reassurance felt by the belief in guardian angels, Mika'il as an angel of mercy, angels recording actions in a 'book of deeds' and that believe that when they die they will be questioned in their grave by two angels.

Many responses were developed with the idea that Muslims will want to reach Jannah so will act accordingly, or the concept that Muslims would be thankful for the input they believe angels have upon their lives.

Often, students who lost out on marks in this question either did not explain how belief in angels *influences* the lives of Muslims or included an influence unrelated to belief in angels specifically. Some students named the wrong angel when explaining their response. For example, 'Muslims may be encouraged to live according to the teachings in the Qur'an to reach Jannah. This is because they believe *Jibril* is recording their deeds.'

1.4

Question 1.4 was well answered by many students who correctly explained two reasons why the Qur'an has authority. Many stated its importance as the word of God, revealed to Muhammad through Jibril. Many included the belief that – unlike other sacred texts – the Qur'an has not been altered, therefore comes directly from God. Some students included some reference to the guidance that can be found within the Qur'an, which provides a scaffold for Muslim daily life.

Students commonly omitted a reference to a specific scripture or source of teaching altogether and therefore were not credited for this. Care was taken to credit the mark for reference to '*scripture or another source of Muslim belief and teaching*' only when students cited the name of a holy book or another source of belief and teaching. General mentions of 'the Qur'an' were not credited when these were *describing* the Qur'an, rather than relaying a teaching from it.

To ensure students who include a source of authority or relevant quotation receive the marks for this, centres need to further encourage them to name the source. For example, 'the Qur'an says...', 'it is mentioned in the hadith that...' etc. They could also place the name of the source in brackets after the phrase itself.

1.5

This question was a good differentiator as it was challenging for many students. Generally, students demonstrated a sound understanding of the key concepts included in the question: Allah's merciful nature and its relationship with beliefs about Hell. Many students supported the reasons they gave with evidence and explanation. This meant that most answers rested in levels 2 and 3, with the highest percentage achieving 7 marks.

The best responses engaged with the issue at the core of the question. They were coherent and insightful, with sophisticated use of judgement throughout. More able students used their knowledge to wrangle with the issue of God's mercy and its relationship with their belief in Hell, leading to judgements and counterarguments. Many responses used concepts included in the mark scheme. What they went on to do with these differentiated between the complex and more basic responses.

In support of the statement, common responses included reasons such as: Hell is a state of total separation from God, it contradicts the idea of a loving and forgiving God, the belief in predestination and the beneficent nature of God.

Arguments opposing the statement included: God's just nature, Adalat is one of the five roots of Usul ad-Din, God is always fair, predestination does not exclude human freedom, humans are responsible for their decisions, God judges accordingly, and Muslims have the teachings of the Qur'an to show them how to act and the results of acting against God's will.

Most students gained two or three marks for SPaG, with the majority achieving three. Students are using specialist terminology more confidently. Approximately 7% received zero for SPaG, which was often due to little or no content available to assess the quality of written communication. SPaG marks on 1.5 and 2.5 were broadly in line with each other.

2.1

Over 65% of students knew that Id-ul-Fitr celebrates the end of Ramadan. Fewer students confused Id-ul-Fitr with Id-ul-Adha than might have been expected.

2.2

This question concerning religious actions during hajj was generally well answered, with over 70% receiving two marks. Many students noted that Muslims enter a state of ihram, walk around the Ka'aba (seven times), touch the black stone, walk between Safa and Marwah, pray at Mina, read the Qur'an there, pray for the whole afternoon on Arafat, etc. Some responses included brief or somewhat generic terms, such as 'pray' or 'fast' which were credited as correct, despite their brevity.

2.3

In this question many students correctly explained two Muslim views about the importance of prayer. Many students included: prayer at home and mosque, Shi'a and Sunni differences in number of prayers each day, general importance of prayer as a form of regular communication with God and constant reminder and practice of faith throughout every day. Some responses were capped at two marks due to a lack of a contrasting view. Others attempted to argue why other Muslim beliefs or practices might be more important than prayer, sometimes successfully, but often less so. Some students compared the number of times many Sunni and Shi'a Muslims pray each day. The most successful of these were able to distinguish the importance of five or three daily prayers; however many simply stated, 'Sunni Muslims pray five times a day, while Shi'a Muslims pray three times a day' without explaining the importance of this.

2.4

This question concerning beliefs about the benefits of fasting (sawm) was as well answered as 1.4, with a similar proportion of students achieving each mark. Common responses included: it strengthens Muslims' control over their bodies and is a sign of total submission to God, encourages empathy with the poor and generosity towards those in need and strengthens commitment to God as the devotion of the soul is more important than fulfilment of physical needs and desires.

A commonly cited source of authority was, ‘O you who have believed, decreed upon you is fasting... that you may become righteous.’ (Qur’an 2:183). Students often omitted a reference to a specific scripture or source of teaching or failed to name their source, as per 1.4. Centres may wish to emphasise to students the importance of naming the source.

2.5

This question which asked students to evaluate the statement: ‘Zakah (giving alms) is the best way for Muslims to show their obedience to God.’ It was answered generally better than 1.5, perhaps due to the broader nature of content that could potentially be included. Students drew from a wide range of material to argue against the statement, comparing the obedience shown via zakah with an array of other beliefs and practices in Islam.

Common arguments in favour of the statement included: the role of zakah as one of the Five Pillars, it is commanded in the Qur’an, beliefs, such as prayer, must lead to actions, it strengthens the ummah, it shows that everything is a gift from God, wealth is God’s, not humans’ and Muslims will be judged on how they helped others on judgement day.

While responses to 2.5 were generally longer and more detailed, SPaG marks on 2.5 were broadly in line with those of 1.5.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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