

**GCSE**

**Religious Studies (Short Course)**

8061/3 Paper 3 Islam

Report on the Examination

8061  
June 2024

Version: 1.0

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## General comments

Some students were well-prepared for this short course exam with the best demonstrating a coherent and wide-ranging knowledge of Islam. Some were able to use specialist terminology to good effect, and some supported question 1.4 with quotations and appropriate sources of authority to enable the fifth mark to be attained. Centres should remember that a source of authority must be cited, for example Qur'an, Hadith, sunnah, Muhammad, etc, and it is not sufficient to simply give a quotation without the source.

The paper tested specific knowledge of concepts in the specification and required answers that were focused on this. Some students did this well, but a significant number wrote about related matters, eg judgement only, when justice was the target knowledge. Centres are advised to encourage students to unpack questions carefully in order to sharply focus on the question and to note that all aspects of the specification should be taught to the same high level, even the more difficult concepts.

Some of the evaluative responses for the 1.5 question were well articulated and even answers attaining lower marks demonstrated some knowledge and understanding of the Islamic religion in their responses even if these were not overly detailed or in depth.

Some students were able to remember the differences in beliefs between Sunni and Shi'a and use appropriate key terms and the more that students were able to grasp the Arabic words and terms, the stronger their responses tended to be for both assessment objectives.

### Question 1.1

A significant number of students selected the incorrect option for this question which required identification of the first prophet in Islam. It is important students have knowledge of the prophets named in the specification.

### Question 1.2

Approximately one in three students gained both marks on this question which asked about two Muslim beliefs about the Prophet Ibrahim. Some students confused Ibrahim with Muhammad. Where Ibrahim was known, answers were too often imprecise, eg suggesting that he had killed his son rather than he was willing to do so because Allah asked him to, demonstrating faith. Almost 60% of students gained at least one mark but a significant percentage did not attempt the question. There were a considerable number of generic answers which were only credited where they added some value specifically in the context of Ibrahim, eg 'he prayed at Mecca' was considered too generalised. A small number of students wrote more than needed for this style of question.

### Question 1.3

Over 60% of students gained at least one mark on the influence of beliefs in predestination, but the number scoring full marks was much lower. Many of those gaining marks for influence were able to link predestination to trust in Allah or to understanding of his characteristics, or to using free will to follow guidance on how to live. While some students could provide a Sunni version and a Shi'a version of belief, it was sometimes clear from wording poorly memorised that they did not fully understand this concept.

Many students wrote about the afterlife or heaven and hell but needed to link this more clearly to predestination and choices made by believers. Some students were able to write about not questioning predestination because Allah knows best.

#### **Question 1.4**

On the whole the concept of God's justice did not produce the depth of answers that it could have. Where it was understood, answers often lead straight to a simple idea of fairness in judgement and some students found it difficult to write about more than this. A number of students wrote only about the process of judgement without explaining justice, which resulted in fewer marks awarded. Some more thoughtful answers explored the idea of justice in terms of people's expectations of life and how difficult lives would be made fair later on through God's justice. A number of students were able to write about humans applying God's idea of justice and the issues around this.

References to source were sometimes made but without specifically naming the source, in which case the mark was not able to be given.

#### **Question 1.5**

A number of students answered this question on the authority of the Qur'an well enough to reach Level 4, with some very good answers amongst them. These students clearly focused on the authority of the Qur'an and what gives it authority.

Some students gave quite generic answers about the 'importance' of the Qur'an without reference to authority. Some answers were descriptive about the treatment of the Qur'an; while some wrote that this showed its authority, they did not say why it had authority or was the most important.

Where students gained marks for a different point of view, many relied on contrasting the authority of imams but some were able to relate this back to all authority coming from Allah and the unique features of the Qur'an that give it authority for Muslims. There were, however, simple comparisons which left students' responses in the lower levels.

#### **SPAG**

It should be noted that in addition to spelling and grammar, the mark here takes into account use of specialist terms. It is also important to note that there were more scripts where the quality of handwriting was poor this year and, while every attempt is made to decipher what is written some students might benefit from more support and further practice in this area.

### **Mark Ranges and Award of Grades**

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