



# Examiners' Report Principal Examiner Feedback

June 2025

Pearson Edexcel Advanced Level  
In Religious Studies (9RS0)  
Paper 4D Islam

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## **9RS0 4D Islam**

### **Introduction**

This paper provided an opportunity for candidates to demonstrate their understanding of the study of Islam. Due to the breadth of the paper, candidates were able to explain beliefs, sources of wisdom and authority; practices that shape and express religious identity within Islam, and values and teachings. Most candidates showed a very good level of knowledge and understanding (AO1) of Islam which were found within the Islam specification. Most candidates were also able to assess and analyse (AO2) ideas and concepts found within the paper. There were some outstanding and impressive answers by candidates which demonstrated high levels of understanding. The majority of candidates managed their time well and provided sufficient detail for the questions. In the instances where candidates did not perform so well, their answers did not have the sufficient level of detail required to reach the higher levels of the mark scheme. Some candidates did not demonstrate an adequate level of AO2 and instead focussed on AO1 material in these questions.

### **Q1 Explore key features of the martyrdom of Husain. (8)**

A large portion of the responses to this question scored well. Candidates could demonstrate key features and details surrounding the martyrdom of Husain. Candidates could highlight when and where the event took place alongside details including key figures involved such as Yazid and Ibn Ziyad. Candidates could also highlight how the martyrdom of Husain impacted Shi'a practices and why it was given such importance. The best responses gave a very accurate retelling of the battle of Karbala alongside brief context on why the battle took place. In this way the candidates were able to comprehensively develop key religious ideas and beliefs (AO1) and show the required depth of levels on the mark scheme. Weaker responses did not provide much information around the martyrdom itself and instead provided information around Shi'a beliefs which were not required by the question.

### **Q2 Assess the relationship between the modern world and Shari'ah law. (12)**

Most candidates were able to score well on this question. Many candidates could provide details of multiple relationships between Shari'ah law and the modern world, with varying degrees of the strengths and weaknesses of these. This satisfied the AO2 requirements for the question. The highest scoring candidates could also assess the intricate relationship between the sources of Shari'ah law and the modern world, such as issues around traditional interpretation and modern rejection of some sources such as Hadith rejection by some people. The lower scoring responses only provided descriptive features of Shari'ah and unfortunately did not meet the requirements of AO2 by doing so.

**Q3a (a) Clarify the ideas illustrated in the passage about the message of the Qur'an. (10)**

Most candidates responded well to this question and were able to use the passage to highlight ideas about the message of the Qur'an. The passages contained enough diversity to allow candidates to introduce a variety of ideas including creation themes, ideas around the nature of Allah and even the afterlife. The best answers used the ideas in the passage as a springboard to develop bigger ideas found in the Qur'an. These answers showed clear understanding of sources of wisdom and authority alongside key beliefs and ideas. Weaker responses repeated the passage in their own words without adding any depth or detail. It is important for candidates to recognise that they need to use their own knowledge and understanding to clarify the ideas in the passage.

**Q3b Analyse the use of the Qur'an for the application of key moral principles in Islam. (20)**

There were varied responses to this question. For stronger answers, candidates were able to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding around how the Qur'an is used to frame moral activities. These stronger answers debated the importance of the Qur'an against secondary sources such as Hadith or scholarly input. There were interesting debates around the Quranist perspective and how they would compare against other interpretations of Islam. Relevant examples were used by strong candidates to demonstrate how aspects of morality have become fluid in the contemporary world and the implications of this.

Candidates who did not perform as well limited their answers to highlighting different moral principles without adequately showing connections between the range of elements raised by the question. These answers were far more descriptive with AO1 knowledge and lacked the analysis required for AO2. As a consequence, these candidates could not score higher than level one. Where a question requires AO2, centres should remind candidates that if the AO2 is lacking, they will not be able to go beyond level one.

**Q4 Evaluate the importance of the five pillars in the contemporary world. (30)**

This question was a good discriminator of candidates' religious studies skills; it gave candidates the opportunity to discuss the centrality of the five pillars to the lives of Muslims, with a focus on the contemporary world. Most candidates gave the correct amount of time to this question allowing them to show the AO1 and AO2 skills required. Some candidates ran out of time, and these gained lower marks as a result. Most candidates were able to describe key aspects of the five pillars with great detail showing their depth of knowledge and understanding. They then developed their arguments and assessed the significance of the pillars by highlighting their practice today. For many candidates, their arguments honed in on the interplay between belief and action whilst highlighting the diversity of practices found in the modern world. Better candidates accurately used specialist language and terminology whilst examining how some aspects of the pillars may have lost their meaning as they have been reduced to actions without spiritual connections. The strongest responses were able to critically deconstruct religious information about the influence of each of the pillars with excellent debates around the cost of Hajj and its modern process making it feel like a holiday which led to coherent and logical chains of reasoning. They were then able to contrast this with information around how the spiritual dimensions of the pillars were described in early sources of Islam.

Weaker responses simply described the five pillars gaining some LO1 marks. There were also some candidates capped at level four because they had not provided an adequate synoptic link.

### **Summary**

Based on the performance on this paper students should:

- Apply material specific to the question asked.
- Write concisely and use evidence to support arguments
- Learn and use specialist language and terminology
- Ensure that answers requiring AO2 limit the amount of AO1 material given.
- Remember that contrasting arguments to an idea is an effective way to show AO2 skills
- Be familiar with all of the requirements of the specification
- Practice answering exam questions in the time given
- Make use of adequate synoptic link in question four