



Examiners' Report Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2025

Pearson Edexcel GCSE
In Religious Studies A
Paper 1: Area of Study 1 – Study of Religion
Option 1C - Islam

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GCSE (9-1) Religious Studies Religious Studies A Paper 1C: Area of Study 1 – Islam

The paper contributes to 50% of the overall award.

The assessment consists of four questions and candidates must answer all questions. The details of the assessment content are provided in the specification. Centres are to use this, rather than other published resources when planning the course content.

This area of study comprises a study in-depth of Christianity as a lived religion in the United Kingdom and throughout the world.

There are four sections:

- Beliefs and Teachings;
- Practices;
- Sources of Wisdom and Authority;
- Forms of Expression and Ways of Life.

Candidates had studied Christianity within the context of the wider British society.

Please note: AO stands for 'Assessment Objective' SPaG stands for 'Spelling, Punctuation and Grammar'

Question 1a

Candidates were assessed on Section One: Beliefs and Teachings.

Bullet point 1.7 al-Qadr: the nature and importance of Predestination for Muslims; how al-Qadr and human freedom relates to the Day of Judgement, including reference to Sahih al-Bukhari 78:685; divergent understandings of predestination in Sunni and Shi'a Islam; the implications of belief in al-Qadr for Muslims today.

The question asked was: 'Outline three teachings about the nature of al-Qadr.

Candidates are asked to 'Outline' on (a) items. Therefore, lists can reach a maximum of one mark.

GENERIC advice for centres to what constitutes a list.

Outline 3 characteristics of Allah:

- Allah is creator (1 mark)
- Allah is creator, judge and lawgiver (1 mark for list or sentence)
- Allah is creator, busy and distant (1 mark for the sentence identifying one correct piece of information) Creator, judge, lawgiver (1 mark for list)
- Creator, busy, distant (0 Marks)
- Candidates should write in three separate sentences: this ensures correct responses are credited fully and avoids losing marks for writing in list format.

Many good answers that often linked to Allah's omniscience and the security this gives. Some candidates were giving general teachings about akhirah but generally this was well answered.

Question 1b

Candidates were assessed on Section One: Beliefs and Teachings.

Bullet point: 1.3 The nature of Allah: how the characteristics of Allah are shown in the Qur'an and why they are important; Tawhid (oneness), including Surah 16:35–36, immanence, transcendence, omnipotence, beneficence, mercy, fairness and justice, Adalat in Shi'a Islam.

The question asked was: Explain two reasons why the nature of Allah as Merciful is important

Candidates are asked to 'Explain two' on (b) items. Therefore, two reasons are required, and both need to be developed for 4 marks. Development consists of a piece of extra information, a reference to a source of wisdom, a quote or examples. The development must be of the reason given and to the question asked

Generally, well answered linking to judgement and how mercy would affect a Muslims life. Some candidates were not making the link to importance

Question 1c

Candidates were assessed on Section One: Beliefs and Teachings.

Bullet point: 1.5 Muslim holy books (Kutub) – the nature, history, significance and purpose of Muslim holy books with reference to: the Qur'an; the Tawrat (Torah), including Surah 5:43–48; the Zabur (Psalms), including Surah 4:163–171; the Injil (Gospel), including Surah 57:27; and the Sahifah (Scrolls). Divergent Muslim views about the importance of the holy books in their lives today

The question asked was: Explain two purposes of Muslim holy books. In your answer you must refer to a source of wisdom and authority.

Candidates are asked to 'Explain two' on (c) items. Therefore, two reasons are required, and both need to be developed for four marks. Development consists of a piece of extra information, a reference to a source of wisdom, a quote or examples. The development must be of the reason given and to the question asked. The reasons then should be supported with a 'reference to a source of wisdom', which must support the reason given and cannot be awarded twice. Therefore, if it is used as development, it does not gain a second mark for the source.

GENERIC advice for centres to what constitutes a source of wisdom

- If the candidate stated that the source of wisdom was from the Qur'an and then paraphrased or quoted something else from Hadith, it was not credited
- If the candidate gave the paraphrase or quote (eg from hadith) and then put an incorrect source (Qur'an 2:18) in brackets it was awarded, and the bracketed reference was ignored.
- If a candidate quoted Muhammad and it was Ali or vice versa, and the quote was not accredited to them, it was not credited.
- The candidate did not have to reference a quote or quote it word for word.
- If a candidate gave the right source but the wrong chapter/verse within the correct source, then the reference still gained the mark. There are alternative interpretations of the hadith.
- Examiners use their judgement when searching for phrases and quotes and take into account that the Arabic can be interpreted differently by different sources. Candidates may use different Qur'an and hadith interpretations
- References to sources of wisdom do not need to directly quote but can paraphrase.

Very well answered as students could call upon either holy books generally or specific ones most often the Qur'an and this often led to good access to the higher marks.

Question 1d

Candidates were assessed on Section One: Beliefs and Teachings

The focus of the marking changes from AO1 to AO2 on the (d) items. The candidates were assessed on AO2, Analyse and evaluate aspects of religion and belief. This constitutes 50% of the overall mark.

Bullet point 1.2 The Five Roots of 'Usul ad-Din in Shi'a Islam: Tawhid (oneness of Allah); 'Adl (Divine Justice); Nubuwwah (Prophethood); Imamah (Successors to Muhammad) and Mi'ad (The Day of Judgment and the Resurrection); the nature, history and purpose of the Five Roots with reference to their Qur'anic basis, including Surah 112 (the oneness of Allah); the importance of these principles for different Shi'a communities today, including Sevener and Twelver.

The question asked was: "Imamah is the most important Shi'a belief."

Evaluate this statement considering arguments for and against.

In your response you must:

- refer to Muslim teachings
- refer to different Muslim points of view
- reach a justified conclusion.

This was well answered and largely placed Imamah in an argument against Tawhid. Many students linked back to Sunni beliefs to provide alternative viewpoints.

'D' items are marked using levels and awarded a best fit according to the level descriptors. There are 3 marks for spelling, punctuation and grammar on Question 1(d).

Question 2a

Candidates were assessed on Section Two: Practices.

Bullet point: 2.3 Salah as one of the Five Pillars, including reference to Surah 15:98–99 and 29:45: the nature, history, significance and purpose of Salah for Sunni and Shi'a Muslims, including different ways of understanding them; how Salah is performed, including ablution, times, directions, movements and recitations, in the home and mosque and Jummah prayer.

The question asked was 'Outline three ways ablution before Salah is performed.'

Candidates are asked to 'Outline' on (a) items. Therefore, lists can reach a maximum of one mark.

There was a vast range of answers here and some students gained marks easily by referring to different body parts being cleansed. Some students had a high technical knowledge and linked to aspects of the mark scheme. Others did not focus on ablution and talked more generally about Salah and therefore failed to gain marks.

Question 2b

Candidates were assessed on Section Two: Practices.

Bullet point: 2.2 Shahadah as one of the Five Pillars: the nature, role and significance of Shahadah for Sunni and Shi'a Muslims, including reference to Surah 3:17–21; why reciting Shahadah is important for Muslims, and its place in Muslim practice today.

The question asked was: 'Explain two ways Shahadah is important in Muslim practice today.'

Candidates are asked to 'Explain two' on (b) items. Therefore, two reasons are required, and both need to be developed for 4 marks. Development consists of a piece of extra information, a reference to a source of wisdom, a quote or examples. The development must be of the reason given and to the question asked.

Very well answered and candidates were able to link to where Shahadah is used in different parts of a Muslims life.

Question 2c

Candidates were assessed on Section Two: Practices.

Bullet point: 2.7 Jihad: the origins, meaning and significance of Jihad in Islam; divergent understandings of Jihad within Islam, including the difference between lesser and greater Jihad; the conditions for declaration of lesser Jihad, including reference to Surah 2:190–194 and 22:39; the importance of Jihad in the life of Muslims.

The question asked was: Explain two reasons greater Jihad is important in Islam.. In your answer you must refer to a source of wisdom and authority.'

Candidates are asked to 'Explain two' on (c) items. Therefore, two reasons are required, and both need to be developed for four marks. Development consists of a piece of extra information, a reference to a source of wisdom, a quote or examples. The development must be of the reason given and to the question asked. The reasons then should be supported with a 'reference to a source of wisdom' which must support the reason given and cannot be awarded twice. Therefore, if it is used as development, it does not gain a second mark for the source.

This was very well answered and candidates made useful reference to accurate sources of wisdom. Very few candidates confused greater and lesser jihad.

Question 2d

Candidates were assessed on Section Two Practices.

The focus of the marking changes from AO1 to AO2 on the d items. The candidates are being assessed on AO2 Analyse and evaluate aspects of religion and belief. This constitutes 50% of the overall mark.

Bullet point: 2.8 The nature, origins, activities, meaning and significance of the celebration/ commemoration of Id-ul-Adha, with reference to Surah 37:77–111, and Id-ul-Fitr in Sunni Islam, with reference to their place within Shi'a Islam; and Id-ul-Ghadeer, with reference to Hadith and the interpretation of Surah 5:3, and Ashura in Shi'a Islam, with reference to their place within Sunni Islam.

The question asked was: "Ashura is a commemoration only for Shi'a Muslims."

Evaluate this statement considering arguments for and against.

In your response you must:

- refer to Muslim teachings
- refer to different Muslim points of view
- reach a justified conclusion.

'D' items are marked using levels and awarded a best fit according to the level descriptors.

Students were able to present a broad range of arguments and were often able to articulate the different Shi'a and Sunni practices

Question 3a

Candidates were assessed on Section Three: Sources of Wisdom and Authority

Bullet point: 3.2 The Prophet Muhammad: events in the life of the Prophet, including teaching and authority; his call, work in Makkah and Madinah, the Hijrah; the significance of these events and the Prophet Muhammad for Muslims today, including Surah 48:26–29.

The question asked was: Outline three reasons why the Hijrah from Makkah to Medinah was important.

Candidates are asked to 'Outline' on (a) items. Therefore, lists can reach a maximum of one mark.

Well answered and candidates gave a wide range of answers often about fleeing persecution or growing Islam.

Question 3b

Candidates were assessed on Section Three: Sources of Wisdom and Authority

Bullet point: 3.4 The divergent understandings of the significance of the family of the Prophet Muhammad: Caliph/Imam Ali (Ahl-ul-Bayt) in Sunni and Shi'a Islam and interpretations of Surah 33:32–34; the family of the Prophet in Ismaili Islam; the implications for questions of authority and the origins of the split between Sunni and Shi'a Islam.

The question asked was: Explain two beliefs about the family of Prophet Muhammad in the Ismaili tradition of Shi'a Islam.

Candidates are asked to 'Explain two' on (b) items. Therefore, two reasons are required, and both need to be developed for 4 marks. Development consists of a piece of extra information, a reference to a source of wisdom, a quote or examples. The development must be of the reason given and to the question asked.

Generally well answered and required a deeper knowledge of the specification to gain the marks. Many answers linked to the family of the Prophet (pbuh).

Question 3c

Candidates were assessed on Section Three: Sources of Wisdom and Authority

Bullet point 3.6 Shari'ah Law: how it is agreed upon and the use of analogy (qiyas) and consensus (ijma), including interpretations of Surah 4: 115; its divergence of use by the main schools of Sunni and Shi'a Islam; specific examples showing links between the Qur'an,

Hadith, and Shari'ah; divergent understandings of the role and significance of judges (qadis) and scholars (the 'ulema) as sources of authority: the establishment of judges and scholars; examples of their rulings; the significance of authority within Islam today.

The question asked was: Explain two examples of the use of analogy (qiyas) in Shari'ah law. In your answer you must refer to a source of wisdom and authority.'

Candidates are asked to 'Explain two' on (c) items. Therefore, two reasons are required, and both need to be developed for 4 marks. Development consists of a piece of extra information, a reference to a source of wisdom, a quote or examples. The development must be of the reason given and to the question asked. The reasons then should be supported with a 'reference to a source of wisdom', this must support the reason given and cannot be awarded twice. Therefore, if it is used as development it does not gain a second mark for the source.

Many candidates struggled to link precisely to examples and talked too broadly about qiyas or Shariah. There were a vast range of examples to call upon and when they were e.g. alcohol and drugs, this helped pick up high marks.

Question 3d

Candidates were assessed on Section Three: Sources of Wisdom and Authority

The focus of the marking changes from AO1 to AO2 on the d items. The candidates are being assessed on AO2 Analyse and evaluate aspects of religion and belief. This constitutes 50% of the overall mark.

Bullet point: 3.1 The Qur'an: the revelation and compilation of the Qur'an, including Surah 53:4-18; its significance and authority within Islam today; divergent ways in which the Qur'an is used in the daily life of a Muslim: informal and formal worship, in the home, in the mosque, as a source of teaching and guidance.

The question asked was "The Qur'an is the only authority needed in Islam."
Evaluate this statement considering arguments for and against.

In your response you must:

- refer to Muslim teachings
- refer to different Muslim points of view
- reach a justified conclusion. '

D' items are marked using levels and awarded a best fit according to the level descriptors. There are 3 marks for spelling, punctuation and grammar on 3(d)

Well answered, many balanced and interesting arguments. Some candidates made good use of links to Quranists and Hadith as well as the broader kutb

Question 4a

Candidates were assessed on Section Four: Forms of Expression and Ways of Life

Bullet point: 4.5 The significance of Sufi ways of life: the origins of Sufism, orders, saints, and practice today. Sufi practices of fasting, and dhikr (remembrance) with reference to Surah 13:28: the nature, history, importance and purpose of fasting and dhikr and divergent understandings of their importance for Muslims today.

The question asked was: 'Outline three understandings of the origins of Sufism.'

Candidates are asked to 'Outline' on (a) items. Therefore, lists can reach a maximum of one mark.

This question gained a broad range of answers and was poorly answered when referencing Sufism in general or in linking to famous Sufi's, missing the concept of origins asked for in the question.

Question 4b

Candidates were assessed on Section Four: Forms of Expression and Ways of Life

Bullet point: 4.7 The divergent understandings of use, significance, meaning and purpose of dance, music and poetry within Islam with specific reference to Sufism: the way these are used to express belief, as a devotional act, and how they may be used in other settings; divergent interpretations of the use of dance and music in Islam, including their rejection by some and interpretations of Sahih al-Bukhari 15:70 and 69:494.

The question asked was: Explain two different attitudes towards the use of music in Islam.

Candidates are asked to 'Explain two' on (b) items. Therefore, two reasons are required, and both need to be developed for 4 marks. Development consists of a piece of extra information, a reference to a source of wisdom, a quote or examples. The development must be of the reason given and to the question asked.

Well answered by candidates who often drew from both a positive and negative viewpoint to gain the two different attitudes.

Question 4c

Candidates were assessed on Section Four : Forms of Expression and Ways of Life

Bullet point: 4.2 The mosque: divergent understandings of importance of the mosque, the design and different religious features of mosques, and furniture and objects in the mosque and their use in the various activities that take place, including reference to Sahih al-Bukhari 2:39.

The question asked was: Explain two reasons the mosque is important in Islam. In your answer you must refer to a source of wisdom and authority.'

Candidates are asked to 'Explain two' on (c) items. Therefore, two reasons are required, and both need to be developed for 4 marks. Development consists of a piece of extra information, a reference to a source of wisdom, a quote or examples. The development must be of the reason given and to the question asked. The reasons then should be supported with a 'reference to a source of wisdom', this must support the reason given and cannot be awarded twice. Therefore, if it is used as development it does not gain a second mark for the source.

Very well answered as candidates were about to draw from a wide range of reasons especially about supporting different aspects of the Ummah e.g .families or Jumma prayers.

Question 4d

Candidates were assessed on Section Four: Forms of Expression and Ways of Life

The focus of the marking changes from AO1 to AO2 on the d items. The candidates are being assessed on AO2 Analyse and evaluate aspects of religion and belief. This constitutes 50% of the overall mark.

Bullet point: 4.3 The divergent understandings of the use, significance, meaning and purpose of calligraphy within Islam, including as a rejection of idolatry with reference to Surah 21:51–62: the way it is used to express belief, and how it may be used in the mosque and other settings.

The question asked was: "Calligraphy in a mosque is a distraction."

Evaluate this statement considering arguments for and against.

In your response you must:

- refer to Muslim teachings
- reach a justified conclusion.

'D' items are marked using levels and awarded a best fit according to the level descriptors.

Many useful divergent viewpoints and a range of supportive sources of wisdom about beauty used in this question. Candidates were able to build different arguments for and against to statement.

Summary

- Candidates should write three sentences in 'outline' (a) questions. Each sentence should contain one piece of information. There is no need for development. Incorrect words or sentences should be crossed out
- The 'explain' questions (b) and (c) require two developed points. For (c) items an additional mark is given for a reference to a source of wisdom, which does not need to be referenced and can be paraphrased
- Candidates should be directed to the specification and other published resources to learn key terms and sources of wisdom
- The (d) items need an understanding of religion and belief, as well as the ability to evaluate the validity of arguments in order to reach a conclusion. They should appraise the reasons given, for and against the statement.
- Considering the validity of the evidence is one way to appraise arguments
- Capitalise proper nouns and use subject specific terminology appropriately