



Examiners' Report

Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2024

Pearson Edexcel GCSE

In Religious Studies A

Paper 3 Philosophy & Ethics

3C Islam

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Introduction

Religious Studies A

Paper 3C: Area of Study 3 – Philosophy and Ethics – Islam (Paper code: 1RA0/3C)

The paper contributes to 25% of the overall award.

The assessment consists of two questions and candidates must answer both 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 aspects of Philosophy and Ethics in the context of Islam as a lived religion within the United Kingdom and throughout the world.

There are two sections:

Arguments for the Existence of Allah

Religious Teachings on Relationships and Families in the 21st Century

Candidates have studied Islam within the context of the wider British society, the religious traditions of which are, in the main, Christian. They study how the Qur'an informs a Muslim's understanding of the topics and how approaches to the issues are underpinned by philosophical arguments and ethical theory as applicable. Candidates compare and contrast the areas of ethics and/or philosophy within Islam with non-religious views.

Please note:

AO stands for 'Assessment Objective'

SPaG stands for 'Spelling, Punctuation and Grammar'

Question 1 (a)

Candidates were assessed on Section One: Arguments for the Existence of Allah

Bullet point 1.5 Design argument: the design argument and its use in Islam as a philosophical argument for the existence of Allah and what it shows about the nature of Allah: divergent understandings of the nature and importance of the design argument for the existence of Allah in Islam, including reference to Surah 2: 164; Muslim responses to non-religious (including atheist and Humanist) arguments against the design argument as evidence for the existence of Allah.

The question asked was: 'Outline three ways the design argument shows the existence of Allah.'

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)

Question 1 (b)

Candidates were assessed on Section One: Arguments for the Existence of Allah

Bullet point 1.7 Issues raised by existence of suffering and Allah as compassionate, including Surah 1: **the problems the existence of suffering may raise for Muslims** about the nature of Allah; how the problem and its basis as a philosophical argument may lead some people to reject belief in Allah or cause believers to question their belief.

The question asked: 'Explain two ways the existence of suffering may raise issues for some Muslims'

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.

Question 1 (c)

Candidates were assessed on Section One: Arguments for the Existence of Allah

Bullet point 1.3 Miracles as proof of the existence of Allah: the nature and importance of miracles in Islam; the Qur'an as a miracle including Surah 17: 84–89; **examples of miracles**; reasons why they might lead to belief in the existence of Allah; Muslim responses to non-religious arguments (including atheist and Humanist) which maintain that miracles can be scientifically explained and provide no proof that Allah exists; divergent understandings of what miracles show about the nature of Allah for Muslims.

The question asked was: 'Explain two examples of miracles 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.

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.

Question 1 (d)

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.

The question is 'Evaluate' this statement considering the arguments for and against and reach a justified conclusion – there must be some consideration of the arguments (appraise, judge the value of, for the arguments to reach the higher levels).

Many candidates gave excellent answers, citing reasons for and against, but not considering the value of them or analysing/evaluating them. Formulas and writing frames restricted the flow of the arguments limiting candidates' progression to the highest level.

Many centres had attempted to use a writing frame to encourage appraisal, but many of the candidates did not appear to understand the demands of the skill required.

Some candidates wrote 'This is a strong argument because ...' and repeated the previous point or giving another point or reason referring to the statement, not the argument itself.

In other examples, candidates wrote 'This is a weak argument because...' and gave generic statements such as: 'it's not in the Qur'an'.

The majority of answers did not address the reasons for the diversity within the beliefs of Islam.

In some cases, candidates focussed on the strength/weakness of an argument but had not demonstrated any understanding of religion and belief.

Candidates were assessed on Section One: Arguments for the Existence of Allah.

Bullet point 1.2 Visions as proof of the existence of Allah: the nature and importance of visions in Islam; Qur'anic examples of visions, including Surah 19: 16–22; **reasons why they might lead to belief in the existence of Allah and Muslim responses to nonreligious arguments (including atheist and Humanist) which maintain that visions are hallucinations and provide no proof that Allah exists**; divergent understandings of what visions show about the nature of Allah for Muslims, with reference to Sunni, Shi'a and Sufi Islam.

The question asked was: "Visions prove Allah's existence."

Evaluate this statement considering arguments for and against.

In your response you must:

- refer to Muslim teachings
- refer to non-religious 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 1(d).

Question 2 (a)

Candidates were assessed on Section Two: Religious Teachings on Relationships and Families in the 21st Century.

Bullet point 2.5 Muslim teaching on contraception: **divergent Muslim teachings and attitudes about contraception and family planning including reference to Sahih Al-Bukhari 34: 432, and 62: 136;** different non-religious (including atheist and Humanist) attitudes to family planning and the application of ethical theories, such as situation ethics, and Muslim responses to them

The question asked was: ‘Outline three Muslim teachings on contraception.’

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

Question 2 (b)

Candidates were assessed on Section Two: Religious Teachings on Relationships and Families in the 21st Century.

Bullet point 2.6 Muslim teaching about divorce: **divergent Muslim beliefs, teachings and attitudes towards divorce and remarriage,** including Surah 2: 226–241 and the different rules for performing a divorce in Shi’a and Sunni Islam; different non-religious (including atheist and Humanist) attitudes to divorce and remarriage, including the application of ethical theories, such as situation ethics, and Muslim responses to them.

The question asked: ‘Explain two Muslim attitudes to remarriage.’

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.

Question 2 (c)

Candidates were assessed on Section Two: Religious Teachings on Relationships and Families in the 21st Century.

Bullet point 2.8 Muslim teachings about gender prejudice and discrimination: **Muslim attitudes to gender prejudice and discrimination, including Surah 33: 35**; examples of gender equality in action in Islam.

The question asked was: ‘Explain two Muslim teachings about gender discrimination.

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.

Question 2 (d)

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. The question is ‘Evaluate’ this statement considering the arguments for and against and reach a justified conclusion – there must be some consideration of the arguments (appraise the arguments to gain the higher grades).

Many candidates gave excellent answers giving reasons for and against but not analysing or evaluating them. Formulas and writing frames restricted the flow of the arguments restricting students’ progression to the highest level. ‘D’ items are marked using levels and awarded a best fit according to the level descriptors.

Candidates were assessed on Section Two: Religious Teachings on Relationships and Families in the 21st Century.

Bullet point 2.4 Support for the family in the ummah: how and why the community tries to support families, including through worship, rites of passage, classes for parents, groups for children and counselling; **divergent understandings of the importance of this support for Muslims today** and how it might strengthen the ummah, with reference to Surah 3: 102–105.

The question asked was: “Support from the ummah helps strengthen families.”

Evaluate this statement considering arguments for and against.

In your response you must:

- refer to Muslim teachings
- reach a justified conclusion.

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.