



Examiners' Report

Principal Examiner Feedback

June 2025

Pearson Edexcel GCSE
In Religious Studies A
Paper 4: Area of Study 4 – Textual Studies
Option 4B – Islam

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Introduction

Religious Studies A

Paper 4B: Area of Study 4B –The Qur'an – Islam (Paper code:1RA0/4B). 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.

The textual studies section for Islam refers specifically to the Qur'an.

There are two sections:

- Beliefs and Teachings of Islam;
- Lives of the Prophets and Others.

The themes and teachings of the Qur'an are explored in depth; the references within the specification should be used as a starting point in a student's textual studies and students may use other texts from the Qur'an, Hadith and other holy books within Islam to help contextualise, understand and compare the teachings and examples found below. The exploration of the lives of the prophets, and others, should recognise that these stories teach spiritual truths in addition to being stories.

Students should compare and contrast the areas of belief and practice within Islam with non-religious views. The significance and importance of the various beliefs, issues and practices of Muslims today should be explored throughout the two sections. They should understand how varied interpretations of the meaning of passages from the Qur'an may give rise to diversity within Muslim traditions and consider how far Muslim and non-religious communities give authority to the Qur'an, especially in relation to other sources of contemporary authority.

Please note:

AO stands for 'Assessment Objective'

SPaG stands for 'Spelling, Punctuation and Grammar'

Question 1(a)

Candidates were assessed on Section One: Beliefs and Teachings of Islam

Bullet point 1.8 Shari'ah law: how the Qur'an is used as the basis for Shari'ah law (Surah 4:59–60 and 33:21–36) with examples expressed in the life of Muslims today; and how Shari'ah law might be understood in divergent ways in different traditions of Islam; Muslim responses to non-religious arguments (including atheist and Humanist) which suggest that religious observance, such as following Shari'ah, can be seen to be unnecessary.

The question asked was: 'Outline three ways the Qur'an is used as the basis for Shari'ah Law.'

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

GENERIC advice for centres on 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)

This was clearly answered overall with a clear identification of elements that would be used to influence Shari'ah law with reference to Halal and Haram.

Question 1(b)

Candidates were assessed on Section One: Beliefs and Teachings of Islam

Bullet point 1.1 The importance of Allah in Surah al-Fatiha (1): the way Allah is described; **the importance of submission to his will and the significance of this to Muslims living today.**

The question asked: 'Explain **two** reasons submission to Allah's will 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.

This was well answered with most candidates accurately making links to Shahadah and Al Qadr.

Question 1(c)

Candidates were assessed on Section One: Beliefs and Teachings of Islam

Bullet Point 1.4 **The nature of believers in Surah al-Baqarah (2): how believers are described;** the blessings that come through belief; how non-believers are described; understandings of the significance of these passages for different Muslims today.

The question asked was: 'Explain **two** ways non-believers are referred to in Surah al-Baqarah.' 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 (e.g. 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.

This question was well answered with excellent reference to Surah al-Baqarah in the majority of responses.

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.

Candidates were assessed on Section One: Beliefs and Teachings of Islam

Bullet point 1.5 Creation (Surah 45:3–5; 21:30; 41:11; 21:33; 51:47; 7:54; 50:38; 57:4; 71:13–17; 24:45): the events of creation; the role of Allah and humanity in the narrative; the role of humanity as vicegerent/khalifah (Surah 2:30–39); as being above the angels; the significance of these beliefs for Muslims today.

The question asked was: “Humans are above angels in every way.”

Evaluate this statement considering arguments for and against.

In your response you must:

- refer to the Qur’an
- 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).

The highest scoring answers included relevant well integrated chains of argument with quotation or references and added clear evaluative points to support their point of view. These answers also used a wide range of technical and specific language relevant to Islamic study. Most frequently references to the creation of humans and the Angels bowing to Adam and the way Adam taught the Angels. Other common answers included the notion of humans having freewill but Angels lacking this.

Question 2 (a)

Candidates were assessed on Section Two: Lives of the Prophets and Others

Bullet Point 2.1 The Prophet Nuh: the events of his life and teachings in the Qur’an, including Surah 71; his importance as one of the first messengers of Allah; his preaching; his thankfulness (Surah 17:3); his challenges; the Ark and the destruction of his people; the significance of his example for Muslims today.

The question asked was: ‘Outline **three** events of the life of Prophet Nuh shown in the Qur’an.’

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

This was well answered with clarity and accuracy. Occasional confusion with the lives of other prophets.

Question 2(b)

Candidates were assessed on Section Two: Lives of the Prophets and Others

Bullet point 2.5 The Prophet Dawud: the events of his life and teachings in the Qur'an; his importance as a messenger of Allah; Dawud's place in the armies of Saul; his encounter with Goliath (Surah 2:249–251); his armour making; his devotion to Allah; his writing of the Zabur (Psalms), including Surah 17:55; the significance of his example for Muslims today.

The question asked: 'Explain **two** events from the life of Prophet Dawud.'

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.

This was a well answered question with lots of correct references to the Qur'an

Question 2(c)

Candidates were assessed on Section Two: Lives of the Prophets and Others

Bullet Point 2.6 Maryam: the events of her life in the Qur'an and in the Hadith, including Surah 19 (Maryam); her importance as one who submits her will to Allah; her birth; childhood; the annunciation of her pregnancy; and the birth of Isa; the significance of her example for Muslims today; Muslim responses to non-religious arguments (including atheist and Humanist) which maintain that visions, such as the visitation of Jibril to Maryam, are not real and provide no proof that Allah exists.

The question asked was: 'Explain **two** events found in the Qur'an about the life of Maryam.' 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.

This was a well answered question with most students engaging and answering the question appropriately. Most did include a valid Source of Wisdom and Authority and linked it to the question.

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.

Many students included good textual and supportive references in this question from a range of sources.

Candidates were assessed on Section Two: Lives of the Prophets and Others

Bullet Point 2.4 **The Prophet Yusuf: the events of his life and teachings in the Qur'an**, including Surah 12 (Yusuf); his importance as a messenger of Allah; his dreams; **his betrayal**; his life in Egypt and reunion with his family; the significance of his example for Muslims today.

The question asked was: "The betrayal of Prophet Yusuf by his brothers is the most important event of his life."

Evaluate this statement considering arguments for and against.

In your response you must:

- refer to the Qur'an
- reach a justified conclusion.

This was well answered with the majority of responses comparing his betrayal and its importance to his prophethood. Many connected the two and examined the chain of events linking the events in Yusuf's life. The balance of argumentation was largely well written with clear chains of reasoning. Evaluation was often in the form of 'this is a strong/weak argument because' with a reiteration of a previous point.

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.