



Pearson
Edexcel

Examiners' Report
Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2023

Pearson Edexcel GCSE
In Religious Studies A (1RA0)
Paper 4: Area of Study 4 – Textual Studies
Option 4B – The Qur'an

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Introduction

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.

There are two sections:

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

Candidates have studied Islam within the context of the wider British society, the religious traditions of which are, in the main, Christian. The textual studies section for Islam refers specifically to the Qur'an. 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 candidate's textual studies and candidates 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. Candidates compare and contrast the areas of belief and practice within Islam with nonreligious views.

Please note:

AO stands for 'Assessment Objective'

SPaG stands for 'Spelling, Punctuation and Grammar'

The standard of candidate responses was better than previous series, with more candidates able to use the advice from previous years. None of the questions posed any specific challenges and candidates were able to access and interpret all the questions.

1RA0_4B_Q01a

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 was: 'Outline three ways Allah is described in Surah al-Fatiha'

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:

An example: Outline 3 characteristics of God:

- God is creator (1 mark)
- God is creator, judge and lawgiver (1 mark for list or sentence)
- God is creator, busy and distant. (1 mark for the sentence identifying one correct piece of information)
- Busy, distant and God is creator, (1 mark for the sentence identifying one correct piece of information)
- Creator, judge, lawgiver (1 mark for list)
- Creator, busy, distant (0 Marks) (all three elements need to be correct for 1 mark)
- Creator, judge, distant (0 marks)

1RA0_4B_Q01b

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

Bullet point 1.6 Justice (Surah An-Nisa 4: 105–35): the nature and importance of justice as outlined in the Qur'an; its application in the Qur'an, in examples from the life of Muhammad in the Hadith, and divergent ways it is applied by Muslims today.

The question asked was: 'Explain two reasons justice, as outlined in the Qur'an, 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.

1RA0_4B_Q01c

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: 'Explain two ways the Qur'an is used as the basis for 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.

Generic advice for centres to what constitutes a source of wisdom:

- The candidates do not have to reference a quote or quote it word for word.
- If the candidate states that it is in Qur'an 2:18 and then states another verse from Qur'an – then this can be awarded. We are not holding candidate to 'verses' but it must be the correct source.
- If the candidate gives the paraphrase and then puts (Qur'an 2:18) in brackets the paraphrase can have the mark and the bracketed reference is ignored.
- If a candidate quotes Qur'an and it was hadith or vice versa; and the quote is not accredited to them, it is not awarded.

1RA0_4B_Q01d

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 some consideration of the arguments (appraise the arguments to gain the higher grades).

Many candidates do excellent answers giving reasons for and against but not analysing or evaluating them. Formulas and writing frames restricted the flow of the arguments restricting student's progression to the higher levels.

'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).

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: "Blessings are only for believers." Evaluate this statement considering arguments for and against. In your response you should:

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

Please note that, neither in the bullet point, nor on the question are candidates required to give a non-religious response. Candidates must respond to the question asked. Candidates must refer to the Qur'an to achieve beyond Level Two.

1RA0_4B_Q02a

Candidates were assessed on Section Two: Lives of 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 reasons Nuh's example is important for Muslims today.'

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

1RA0_4B_Q02b

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

Bullet point 2.8 Beliefs and teachings about Muhammad and his preaching of Islam in response to the command of Allah (Surah 26: 213–217) and its significance for Muslims today: **the divergent ways in which Muslims might interpret the command to invite others to submission to Allah;** Muslim responses to non-religious arguments (including atheist and Humanist) which suggest that trying to convert other people in today's society is wrong.

The question asked was: 'Explain two ways Muslims interpret the command to invite others to 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.

1RA0_4B_Q02c

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

Bullet point 2.2 The Prophet Ibrahim: the events of his life and teachings in the Qur'an; his importance as a messenger of Allah; his example of living in submission to the will of Allah; **Ibrahim's characteristics (including Surah 37: 109–111)**; his preaching; his development of the Ka'ba (Surah 2: 127–129); his relationships with Hagar and Ismail; his opposition to the worship of idols (including 21: 57–58); the command to sacrifice his son (including possible debate about which son) and comparison of this story with the Tawrat; the significance of his example for Muslims today.

The question asked was: 'Explain two characteristics of Ibrahim in the Qur'an. 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.

1RA0_4B_Q02d

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

Candidates were assessed on Section Two: Lives of 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 was: "Dawud's most important quality was his leadership."

Evaluate this statement considering arguments for and against. In your response you should:

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

Please note that, neither in the bullet point, nor on the question are candidates required to give a non-religious response. Candidates must respond to the question asked. Candidates must refer to the Qur'an to achieve beyond Level Two.

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.