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Examiners' Report
Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2023

Pearson Edexcel GCSE
In Religious Studies B (1RB0)
Paper 3: Area of Study 3 – Religion, Philosophy
and Social Justice
Option 3C – Islam

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Introduction

This paper contributes 50% of the overall award at GCSE. The paper consists of four compulsory questions, each covers a section of the specification, and all candidates are expected to answer all four sub-questions from each section. Details of the assessment content are provided in the specification. Centres are expected to use the Edexcel specification, rather than other published resources, when planning and teaching the course content. The examination is written based on the specification content.

This paper encourages an in depth study of Islam today. 1RBO 3C consists of two generic sections, Muslim Beliefs and Living the Muslim Life, with two option topics, Philosophy of Religion and Equality.

By comparison to the previous examination series the following observations can be made:

a)-type sub-questions: Candidates, in general, were confident in accessing these questions. The majority of candidates suggested three valid points in response to the questions. It was pleasing to note that very few candidates gave three words in response to a question, offering brief sentences or phrases instead. These were credited with a mark when correct rather than 1 mark for 3 single words.

b)-type sub-questions: Questions continued to be well executed by candidates who grasped the concept of a developed reason.

c)-type sub-questions: The use of a relevant source of authority has improved significantly since 2019. Some confusion persists between sources derived from the Qur'an and those found in the Hadith. If the candidate said where the quotation came from, and attributed it to the wrong source, this was not credited.

d)-type sub-questions: In d) questions the standard has improved significantly since 2019. Candidates demonstrated a sound understanding of the content requirements to reach the top of Level 2 and significantly more candidates attempted to make judgements of the quality of the arguments offered. It remains true that this judgement and appraisal is rarely continued into the conclusion, which more often than not, is simply a statement of personal opinion rather than a conclusion shown to be justified by the evidence presented.

There was evidence of entire sub-questions missed out by the candidates. This may be directly attributable to the complications to teaching time caused by the continuing effects of the closure of schools due to Covid, or to missed teacher contact time as more staff are ill.

SECTION 1: Muslim Beliefs

1RB0_3C_Q01a

1a) Outline **three** Muslim beliefs about the Injil.

A significant proportion of all candidates failed to gain marks largely because they answered as though the question concerned angels rather than the Injil. Almost a quarter of candidates scored full marks. Those who achieved full marks gave reasons such as 'It was given to Isa' or 'It is a holy book'.

Candidates should learn the Arabic words that appear in the specification.

1RB0_3C_Q01b

1b) Explain **two** reasons why Shi'a Muslims believe in Divine Justice.

Candidates who answered this question well suggested ideas such as Allah is a God of justice, with many supporting this with a relevant quote from the Qur'an. Many also discussed the importance of Allah's divine justice with reference to judgement day, suggesting that Muslims can trust that Allah will judge them fairly before deciding if they are destined for paradise or hell.

1RB0_3C_Q01c

1c) Explain **two** reasons why the characteristics of Allah are important.

In your answer you must refer to a source of wisdom and authority.

Many candidates found this straightforward. Some chose to consider the characteristics of Allah as a whole, more commonly candidates chose a particular characteristic, for example, omnipotence, and explained why it was important. Both approaches were credited. A large range of sources of authority were employed to good effect. However, naming the Arabic version of one of Allah's characteristics was not credited as a source of authority. Putting speech marks round a name does not make it serve as a source of wisdom.

1RB0_3C_Q01d

1d) "There is no need for Muslims to fear death."

Evaluate this statement considering arguments for and against.

In your response you should:

- refer to Muslim teachings
- reach a justified conclusion

A significant number of candidates appeared well prepared for this question, offering strong arguments on both sides of the debate. There was some evidence

that some candidates are attempting to make judgements of the quality of their evidence in an attempt to access the higher levels of the mark scheme. This was very rarely sustained throughout the response and almost never was used convincingly to justify the conclusion.

Those who did well argued that those who practiced their faith diligently knew that they would be treated fairly on judgement day and thus had nothing to fear, contrasted with the worry for those who had not respected Allah and his plan and may be at risk of hell. For most candidates there were no issues with SPG with most achieving 3 marks. Candidates who struggled with spelling, punctuation and grammar were most often awarded 2 marks.

SECTION 2: Philosophy of Religion

1RB0_3C_Q02a

2a) Outline **three** issues raised by the problem of suffering for Muslims.

Somewhat surprisingly this made it the most difficult of the a) questions. Some candidates approached it from the perspective of the Inconsistent Triad, suggesting, for example, that it may make them think that Allah is not All-loving if they are left to suffer. Or they may lose their faith. Others took a more pragmatic approach and suggested ways in which a Muslim may face suffering such as illness or being the victim of a natural disaster. Both approaches were credited.

The most common mark awarded was 0. This suggests that many candidates, more than 4 in 10, did not attempt the question. This may be because they did not understand the question.

1RB0_3C_Q02b

2b) Explain **two** ways the nature of Allah is shown through revelation.

Perhaps surprisingly, many candidates dealt with this very successfully. Candidates were very familiar with the concept of revelation. The question required that revelation as a whole, or revelation in a specific form, be clearly linked to the nature of Allah. Some suggested that the Qur'an as a revelation showed the loving nature of Allah, as he sent messengers to every community to tell people about Allah. Others suggested that revelation as a whole revealed the power of Allah, as he could choose to break the laws of science. Yet others suggested that visions revealed that Allah was 'closer than your jugular vein' (Surah 50:16) demonstrating that Allah is transcendent.

1RB0_3C_Q02c

2c) Explain **two** Muslim beliefs about the cosmological argument.

In your answer you must refer to a source of wisdom and authority.

This caused more problems than may have been expected. There were few candidates who clearly understood the difference between the design argument and the cosmological argument, with many discussing the design of the world or the beauty of nature. Those who wrote confidently about causation often found it difficult to suggest a reliable source of authority. Those that did frequently suggested 'When Allah intends, He says "Be!" And it is.' (Surah 36:82).

1RB0_3C_Q02d

2d) "Miracles are real."

Evaluate this statement considering arguments for and against.

In your response you should:

- refer to Muslim teachings
- refer to non-religious points of view
- reach a justified conclusion

This proved surprisingly challenging for a number of students. The question was focused on the reality of miracles, giving candidates the opportunity to discuss historical accounts of miracles in the Qur'an, or more recently reported miracles. Candidates who answered this well often discussed the crossing of the Red Sea. Candidates were offered the opportunity to use non-religious arguments to provide an alternative perspective. A significant minority did not notice this in the question rubric and tried to suggest that some Muslims may not believe in miracles, though they struggled to suggest reasons.

Perhaps the most interesting aspect of this question was that very few candidates made any attempt to judge the quality of the arguments, certainly by comparison to 1d with the result that a very small minority managed to gain marks at Level 3.

SECTION 3: Living the Muslim Life

1RB0_3C_Q03a

3a) Outline **three** reasons why the Shahadah is important to Muslims.

As one of the Five Pillars Shahadah was familiar to the students who gave reasons such as it is a statement of faith, it must be said for a person to revert to Islam

and the idea that it is spoken into the ear of a newborn and at a Muslim's deathbed. All these ideas were credited as reasons why the Shahadah is important.

1RB0_3C_Q03b

3b) Explain **two** teachings from the Qur'an about the Ten Obligatory Acts.

Most candidates demonstrated clear understanding of the teachings from the Qur'an that support the Ten Obligatory Acts. Many considered 'Fasting is prescribed for you' (Surah 2:183) and explained the importance of Sawm for Muslims in terms of growing closer to Allah and demonstrating your dedication to Islam. Others suggested 'Encourage good and forbid evil' (Surah 9:71), and considered it in terms of Amr-bil-MarooF in promoting good choices and good behaviour. Many also referenced the need to pay Zakah, they explained that by saying paying 2.5% Zakah annually was instructed in the Qur'an as a means of supporting the community and helping the poor.

Few candidates attempted to respond with teachings about the Ten Obligatory Acts as a whole, those who did inevitably struggled.

1RB0_3C_Q03c

3c) Explain **two** reasons why performing Hajj is important for most Muslims.

In your answer you must refer to a source of wisdom and authority.

Some candidates failed to associate Hajj with the pilgrimage to Makkah. Those who answered this question well often gained the additional source of authority mark using 'Fasting is prescribed for you' (Surah 2:183). Unfortunately some candidates continue to use the source of authority as a development in c questions, without further development. In order to gain the source of authority mark the quotation must be found in association with a developed reason, rather than a simple reason.

1RB0_3C_Q03d

3d) "Celebrating Id is the best way to unite Muslims."

Evaluate this statement considering arguments for and against.

In your response you should:

- refer to Muslim teachings
- reach a justified conclusion

In many ways the word 'best' carries the greatest significance in this question. It is impossible to argue that that there are no other ways to unite Muslims, like the

experience of praying in congregation so, to provide an alternative perspective, candidates were asked to consider whether it is the 'best' way to unite Muslims. Many candidates were able to make sound, well-reasoned arguments for both sides of the question. On one side by considering one of the Id festivals, such as Id-ul-Adha, and its communal aspect and the uniting of families at the mosque for Id prayers. This was most commonly contrasted with either prayer at the mosque, particularly Jummah prayers, or Hajj, which brings Muslims together from all over the world.

The problem remained with the implementation of A02 with few candidates attempting to deconstruct the arguments given, to judge the quality of the evidence offered or to appraise the relative merits of the two arguments. As a consequence, relatively few candidates achieved Level 3 whilst many demonstrated detailed knowledge and understanding.

For most candidates there were no issues with SPG with most achieving 3 marks. Candidates who struggled with spelling, punctuation and grammar were most often awarded 2 marks.

SECTION 4: Equality

1RB0_3C_Q04a

4a) Outline **three** Muslim teachings about poverty.

Candidates struggled more than may have been expected with this question. The generally lower performance in Section 4 questions may be a reflection of poor time management.

Candidates who did well at this question suggested ideas like poverty is part of the test of life, poverty may be a punishment from Allah or Muslims should help support those living in poverty. Both ideological and practical responses were credited.

1RB0_3C_Q04b

4b) Explain **two** reasons why religious freedom is important to Muslims.

This proved problematic for some. One fifth of all candidates either did not attempt the question or were awarded 0 marks for their efforts. Those candidates who responded well tended to suggest the idea that it allows Muslims to worship freely. Many used the reference from the Qur'an, 'There is no compulsion in religion' (Surah 2:256) to good effect. Some told the story from the Hadith of the Prophet standing out of respect for the funeral of a Jewish person. When questioned about this the Prophet replied 'Was he not also a soul?' This was developed to demonstrate that the Prophet, as the great exemplar considered those of other faiths worthy of respect. Many also suggested that religious freedom allows Muslims to speak to others of their faith and for such people to revert to Islam.

1RB0_3C_Q04c

4c) Explain **two** reasons why many Muslims work to promote racial harmony.

In your answer you must refer to a source of wisdom and authority.

As is the pattern in Section 4 a significant minority of candidates either did not attempt to answer the question or gained 0 marks for the response. This reflects a pattern of diminishing returns in Section 4 questions. This may be due to time-management issues or may be a consequence of the ongoing educational issues caused by the Covid pandemic.

Those who did well often referenced the example of Muhammad, who not only appointed a black man as Islam's first prayer caller, but also, in his final sermon, said 'An Arab has no superiority over a non-Arab nor a non-Arab has any superiority over an Arab.' Some also discussed the idea that Allah created all people. These candidates quoted Allah in the Qur'an, 'We have...made you into peoples and tribes so that you may 'get to' know one another.' (Surah 49:13) as the source of authority. This was coupled to the idea that racism disrespected Allah's creation. A final group of candidates considered the view that Muslims can be victims of prejudice and discrimination if racial harmony does not exist. Suggesting the importance of providing a secure and happy environment for children as a reason why Muslims should promote racial harmony.

1RB0_3C_Q04d

4d) "Working for social justice is the most important thing a Muslim can do."

Evaluate this statement considering arguments for and against.

In your response you should:

- refer to Muslim teachings
- reach a justified conclusion

Many candidates found this question very challenging. A significant minority of candidates simply did not attempt to answer the question. Of those who did some of them equated working for social justice to working in the court system. Whilst it was possible to gain some marks with this approach most candidate found it difficult to access Level 2 in this way. Some suggested that if all Muslims were gainfully employed the crime rate would inevitably drop, implying that crime was due to poor or bored Muslims. Some candidates considered the idea that crime disrupted a person's relationship with Allah and so Muslims should try to reduce crime. A few, more able candidates, linked their response to Lesser Jihad, arguing effectively that working against crime is a way of fulfilling Allah's wish for a just and fair world. They often referenced the work of the Muslim Chaplains Association and their efforts to reform young offenders to change lives and benefit the ummah.

This was then contrasted with other things a Muslim may find more important such as Greater Jihad or fulfilling the Five Pillars.

Summary

Based on their performance on this paper, candidates are offered the following advice:

1. Read questions carefully, answer the question as an entirety rather than one aspect of it.
2. When using sources of authority be as specific as possible, say what the Qur'an or Hadith actually says rather than a summary of the teaching. Avoid phrases such as 'The Qur'an says...' followed by a generic summary of the teaching concerned.
3. Remember that the sources of authority must be linked directly to a developed reason.
4. Focus on understanding what is required to access the higher levels of d questions. It is vital to analyse and judge the quality of the arguments offered. The conclusion of an evaluation should not be a statement of a personal opinion but should be firmly rooted in the evaluation of the evidence provided, leading to a justified conclusion.

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