



Examiners' Report

Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2023

Pearson Edexcel International GCSE
In Islamic Studies (4IS1) Paper 01

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The paper itself was divided into three sections with the first two sections offering a choice of question, while in the third section both questions must be answered. The first section is Section A – The life, teachings and achievements of the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh). The second section is Section B – The key beliefs, practices and features of the early Muslim community founded by the Prophet. The third section is Section C – Living the Muslim life today.

- In a) questions most candidates were able to provide two points that gained full marks demonstrating good knowledge of subject matter. Similarly for question 5 and 6 1 mark for each a0 question.
- In b) questions, candidates who gave a series of simple reasons in answer to the question were unable to get more than 1 mark as they did not show any development. Candidates who developed points often attained 3 marks showing good understanding and knowledge.
- In c) questions, candidates are asked to evaluate a question based on a good explanation. They are asked to show good development and demonstrate good knowledge and understanding. Candidates often moved beyond Level 1 when developing their answers and best candidates did this in a way that showed high evaluation skills attaining Level 3 in doing so.
- In d) questions candidates are asked to develop a balanced discussion of the topic raised by the question, and to show a comprehensive understanding of the implications raised. Centres are reminded that all d) questions have the following requirements:

In your answer you should include:

- reference to text provided
- another point of view
- your opinion/point of view using reasoned arguments
- a balanced conclusion.

Some candidates were able to provide a full and balanced discussion and were able to access marks at Level 3. However, a number of candidates either provided a simple discussion, without development, or a one-sided argument, or failed to refer to the text provided. This limited their ability to gain marks above Level 2, a maximum of eight out of the twelve marks available.

In Section A – The life, teachings, and achievements of the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh). Question 2 proved a more popular question over question 1 with almost twice as many students opting for this question.

Question 1

a) Identify two ways that the Sunnah were recorded.

This was well answered with many candidates focusing on the written account and oral tradition. Some candidates lost marks for describing importance of the Sunnah.

b) Describe the reasons the Prophet chose to fight in battles.

This was well answered by candidates who focused on the Prophet being a role model, offering support and the expansion of Islam. Most marks were dropped by pupils not developing their answer to attain higher marks.

c) Explain why it was important for the Prophet to treat his opponents well.

Many candidates answered this well focusing on the positive relationships formed with non-Muslims who then converted to Islam because of the good character of the Prophet in how he was respectful to his opponents. This was followed by good development but candidates able to attain Level 2 or Level 3.

d) 'Assess the view that Muhammad's (pbuh) early life was of great importance in preparing him as a messenger of Allah.'

Many candidates struggled for higher marks on this question as they did not offer an alternative point of view and some responses failed to evaluate their point, instead describing the early life of the Prophet without linking it to the question. Additionally, candidates evaluated the Surah and focused on the Prophet's relationship with his wives rather than further develop the point fully in relation to the question. Those that referred to two points of view and the text enabled their answers to be developed in such a way that they moved to Level 3. Only including one point of view or not including reference to the text meant pupils then could not go beyond Level 2.

Question 2

a) Give two of the Prophet's teachings on human rights.

Well answered question with many pupils gaining two marks in relating the Prophet's teaching on human rights.

b) Describe the Prophet's encounter with Bahira.

This was a well answered question with many candidates gaining full marks. Those that did so correctly identified who Bahira was, the Prophet being on a trip with Abu Talib and gained full marks by detailed knowledge and full description.

c) Explain why the first complete copy of the Qur'an was made.

Well answered by candidates who identified the significance of the compilation of the Qur'an. Those who gained full marks often took the line of pointing out that many of the faithful were being martyred so those who could remember the teaching were dwindling in numbers, along with the importance of having a singular agreed text for all to follow.

d) 'Assess the view that the Prophet's final pilgrimage and sermon contained his most important teachings'.

Candidates answered this well in particular when relating key teachings of the Prophet's Last Sermon and key elements of this. Candidates who moved their answer to level 3 brought in an alternative viewpoint by pointing out the importance of the Prophet's other teaching along with reference to the text.

SECTION B

The key beliefs, practices and features of the early Muslim community founded by the Prophet. Question 4 proved a more popular question over question 3 with almost twice as many students opting for this question.

Question 3

a) Identify two holy books given by Allah.

Well answered with majority of candidates picking up both marks.

b) Describe the Islamic teaching about nifaq (hypocrisy)

Most candidates understood what nifaq is and that it is a sin in Islam. This meant that many candidates picked up at least 1 mark from this question. Many were able to develop this understanding and developed their answer by referring to the negativity this has on people and faith picking up to 3 marks in doing so.

c) Explain the importance of ijma to Shari'ah Law.

Candidates who understood what ijma is where able to then develop the answer well moving into level 2 and level 3 answers. The linked this to its role in supporting Shari'ah Law and making it something that fits with the modern world. Some candidates only referred to Shari'ah Law and did not mention ijma so dropped marks.

d) 'Assess the view that only the choices a person makes affect their final judgement.'

A number of candidates only referred to people using their free will to make decisions that affect their final judgement and so could not move beyond level 2 8 marks. Many candidates used two points of view and the alternative viewpoint of predestination to counter people only using free will. Some candidates also used the understanding of the mercy of Allah as another viewpoint. The best responses then included reference to the text and another point, with predestination being the most common alternate viewpoint which then saw candidates move into Level 3.

Question 4

a) Identify two categories of Ahkam pentad.

This was the most poorly answered a) question with many candidates not knowing what the categories were.

b) Describe the disagreement that occurred over the leadership of Islam after the death of Muhammad (pbuh).

This was well answered by candidates with the best answers referring to the choice between Ali and Abu Bakr. Most candidates picked up marks from identifying the initial disagreement and the choice of the first Caliph.

c) Explain the importance of manners for Muslims as outlined in the Qur'an.

This was well answered by most candidates. They understood why manners were important as outlined in the Qur'an were able to develop this by giving examples that saw them attain level 2 and beyond. The best answers included the development of the importance of manners in showing the Islamic faith in the best light.

d) Assess the view that Ibrahim was the most important prophet before Muhammad (pbuh).

This question saw most candidates achieve level 1 and level 2 marks. Some candidates were very descriptive in what they wrote just explaining who Ibrahim was and what he did but did not evaluate this in relation to the question and so could not move beyond level 1. Some candidates understood the question and wrote extensively about the importance of Ibrahim and how he was the most important prophet before Muhammad (pbuh). However, they did not offer an alternate point of view and so stayed within level 2. The best answers then included Musa as the alternative with reference to text and so moved to level 3. Candidates who used Muhammad (pbuh) as the alternative point of view dropped marks.

SECTION C – Living the Muslim life today

Question 5

a) Give one condition for the declaration of lesser jihad.

Most candidates picked up this mark though some mixed it up with greater jihad and so lost the mark.

b) Describe how the Shahadah is used in Muslim daily practice.

Most candidates picked up at least one mark by relating the Shahadah to daily prayer and developed further marks by linking this to Ummah uniting in prayer. Candidates also answered this question well by linking the Shahadah to birth and conversion.

c) Explain Muslim teachings on the purpose of families.

This was a well answered question with many candidates getting level 2 through good understanding and development. A number of candidates were able to show an excellent use of facts and a broad range of themes that were fully developed and attained level 3.

d) Assess the view that the main purpose of Salah is to unite all Muslims.

Candidates were able to demonstrate the main purpose of Salah in uniting Muslims and linked this particularly to the Ummah and Friday prayer. Better candidates developed this to gain level 2 responses through good development linked to the question. Reference to text was used positively by candidates. Candidates who gained level 3 answers mostly used an alternative viewpoint of developing a deeper relationship with Allah to gain these marks.

Question 6

a) Identify one Islamic festival observed by all Muslims

Almost all candidates answered this correctly.

b) Describe how some Muslims give Khums.

This was well answered by candidates who knew the difference between Khums and Zakat. Most candidates gained marks from the use of charity to help those in need.

c) Explain why the Prophet and his successors are good examples of leadership for Muslims today.

This was well answered by candidates using the example of the Prophet and his character as a guide for leadership today, often gaining at least level 2. Better answers demonstrated a knowledge of the other leaders and their qualities such as Abu Bakr and Uthman and showed excellent development in doing so gaining level 3 marks.

d) 'Assess the view that Hajj must be performed by all Muslims.'

This was well answered by candidates who were able to explain why Hajj is essential in Islam as a way of uniting Muslims together as an obligatory part of Islamic worship. This was further developed by reference to the text and then the inclusion of another point of view to then move into Level 3. Many candidates rightly identified an alternative viewpoint, such as not being able to attend due to financial difficulties or illness, and made good use of the text.

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

- It is essential for candidates to read the questions carefully, so when answering the question there is a clear correlation that enables candidates to score higher marks.
- In a) questions it is important to give two clear reasons (1 in section 3) to get full marks
- In b) questions candidates need to show development to move beyond level one.
- In c) questions comprehensive development in relation to the question showing comprehensive knowledge and understanding are essential to attain Level 3.
- d) questions require a number of elements, and candidates need to make an effort to meet all of them – specifically they need to attempt to look at the issue from more than one point of view, and ideas should always be developed, and supported with religious teachings.
- A further requirement in d) questions, for those aiming to score marks in Levels 3, is for there to be depth to the discussion. Simple reasons gain marks of course, but the higher levels are gained by those who can show they have a comprehensive understanding of the issue raised and how it relates to the text provided.
- Because c) and d) questions are marked using a levels rather than a points based mark scheme, candidates need to be aware that a series of simple points will rarely allow them to gain more than half the available marks. They should focus on showing depth rather than just breadth of knowledge and understanding.

