



Examiners' Report

Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2025

Pearson Edexcel International GCSE

In Islamic Studies (4IS1)

Paper 01: Islamic Studies

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The paper itself is divided into three sections with the first two sections offering a choice of question, while in the third section all parts of 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 total candidates have 2 hours and 30 minutes to answer four questions with the paper being marked out a total of 90 marks.

- In a) questions most candidates were able to provide two points that gained full marks demonstrating good knowledge of subject matter. Similarly in Section C, almost all candidates gave one point that gained the one mark available in each a) question in this section.
- 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

This year saw many candidates able to provide a full and balanced discussion, with reference to the text, and so 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 1 showed an equal balance between candidates choosing this question and Question 2

Question 1

(a) Identify two ways the Prophet was a role model in being a good husband.

Candidates gained marks, most gaining 2 marks, by highlighting the caring nature of the Prophet and translating this into actions such as treating his wives with respect, encouraging them and helping them with housework.

(b) Describe the conversation between Muhammad (pbuh) and Jibrail in the cave of Hira.

Candidates answered this well and by correctly identifying the conversation and actions of Jibrail, candidates who knew this information were able to show good development in answering the question to gain three marks. Candidates dropped marks by not correctly identifying the conversation or just giving simple points with no development.

(c) Explain the importance of mosques to the early Islamic community in Madinah.

Candidates who answered this gained marks by highlighting how the mosques helped in establishing the early Islamic community and being places where Muslims could gather for the first time in safety and practice their faith. They also highlighted mosques as being a centre point for the emerging Islamic community. These points along with good development enabled candidates to gain marks at Level 2 and Level 3. Some candidates limited development by focusing only on the importance of the mosque in the present day, with no reference to the early Islamic community.

(d) 'The most important role of the Prophet was in the establishment of the Shari'ah (deen).'

Candidates who answered this well explained how the most important role of the Prophet was in establishing the Shari'ah and how this benefitted the Islamic community from its establishment and continues to do so. They then linked this understanding with the quotation often explaining how it is obligatory to listen to the rule of Shari'ah as it is the straight path. They then countered this with an understanding that there were other important roles held by the Prophet such as his place in the revelation of the Qur'an and bringing this to all nations. Candidates could not move beyond Level 2 if they failed to refer to the text or did not include another point of view.

Question 2

(a) Identify two ways that the Qur'an is important to Muslims

Candidates answered this question well with most gaining two marks by identifying it as the Word of Allah and as guidance on how Muslims should live their lives so they can enter Jannah after the Day of Judgement.

(b) Describe the events of the Mi'raj.

Candidates who answered this question best correctly gave good development around the events of the Mi'raj from Muhammad (pbuh) going from Makkah to Jerusalem on the Buraq, ascending into seven heavens with the angel Jibril, meeting and praying with the earlier prophets, meeting Allah and then negotiating and establishing Salah to be performed five times each day. Candidates sometimes mixed the Mi'raj up with Hijrah and so gained no marks. Other candidates lacked development in answer and so gained 1 or 2 marks rather than 3 marks.

(c) Explain the role of the Sunnah in the establishment of Muslim belief and practice.

Many candidates answered this well highlighting how the Sunnah helps clarify the Qur'an and helps Muslims in their daily practice. For example, the practice required in pillars such as Salah. They also mentioned that the Qur'an demands prayer and the Sunnah clarifies how to perform prayer through actions and movements. Candidates also developed the importance of Sunnah as a primary source of authority second only to the Qur'an in the establishment of Islamic belief and practice.

Candidates were then able to access Level 2 and Level 3 in showing this development. Candidates dropped marks by correctly identifying the role of the Sunnah but not developing their answer.

(d) 'The Prophethood of Muhammad (pbuh) was the only reason that Islam was successfully established.'

Candidates were able to identify the reasons why Islam was established successfully through the Prophethood of Muhammad (pbuh). They highlighted how the revelation of the Qur'an occurred and how the Prophet then worked to spread the message of Allah to all nations despite severe hardship and trials. They also highlighted the great messages and words of the Prophet such as in his final sermon and linking this with the text as Allah's messenger. Stronger candidates then gave another point of view such as although Muhammad's (pbuh) prophethood was very important in the establishment of Islam it was the will of Allah that was most important as Allah would have found another way to bring his message to his people. Candidates who gave two points of view and referred to text with developed reasoning then moved into Level 3. Candidates dropped marks if they did not refer to the text or give another point of view and were limited to Level 2 8 marks maximum.

SECTION B – The key beliefs, practices and features of the early Muslim community founded by the Prophet. Question 4 was more popular than question 3 with approx. 20% more candidates opting for question 4.

Question 3

(a) Identify two Muslim beliefs about al-Qadr (predestination).

Due to complexity of Muslim belief around al-Qadr candidates incorporated a number of ideas in their answers. These included the belief that al-Qadr is set for all Muslims and cannot be changed. The belief that although al-Qadr is a Muslim's fate as written by Allah, Muslims are also free to make

their own choices. The belief that certain times of prayer such as Layat al-Qadr where prayers for the year ahead will be answered. This question was positively marked with many candidates gaining two marks.

(b) Describe what Muslims believe about Allah as creator.

Candidates answered this question well when focusing on the characteristic of Allah as creator. They identified his role as creator of all things and how the goodness of Allah is reflected through his creation. Candidates showed good development when linking this understanding with many gaining 3 marks. Candidates who dropped marks did so by not developing points made or in some cases talking about other characteristics of Allah outside his role as creator.

(c) Explain the importance of Dawud as a prophet in Islam.

Candidates who answered this well understood who Dawud was as a prophet and the role he played in the Islamic tradition. Those who saw him as a prophet who helped spread the teachings of Tawhid and of Judgement developed answers well moving to Level 2 and Level 3 responses. Some candidates mixed Dawud up with the lives of other prophets and so dropped marks.

(d) 'Living by correct etiquette, attitudes and manners will certainly lead Muslims to attain Jannah.'

Candidates who answered this well focused on the importance of etiquette, attitudes and manners as a teaching given by Allah that all must live by to attain Jannah. They focused on the life of the prophet and how he displayed these attributes in how he lived his life and guided others to do the same as this created harmony and a positive Islamic community. Candidates then linked this to the text highlighting the text which states not to insult each other for example. They then provided another point of view, citing following the five pillars as just as important to attain Jannah such as the giving of Zakah or performing Salah. Candidates who did not show another point of view or refer to text were limited to Level 2 8 marks maximum depending on development

Question 4

(a) Identify two roles of the Risalah in Islam.

Many candidates answered this well gaining 2 marks. They highlighted their importance as messengers of Allah sent with a specific purpose to bring Allah to his people. Also highlighting the guidelines that people must follow to live in a way pleasing to Allah.

(b) Describe what the holy book of Zabur teaches.

Candidates answered this well when focusing on the link between Zabur and the prophet Dawud. They then developed their explanation by focusing on the teachings of Tawhid and that there would be a final prophet before judgement day. Candidates who dropped marks wrote about how the Zabur were corrupted which is not what the Zabur teaches; or mixed them up with other holy books such as the Tawrah.

(c) Explain the importance of Malaikah in Islam.

Candidates who answered this well focused on how angels are messengers of Allah who interact with his creation giving examples such as how Jibrail revealed the Qur'an to Muhammad (pbuh) and his appearance in the battle of Badr. They also focused on how angels record good and bad deeds for each person making them accountable on the Day of Judgement. These reasons were developed well by candidates enabling them to easily access Level 2 and 3. Candidates dropped marks by being too descriptive of the roles for particular angels and so did not allow enough development to access higher level marks.

(d) 'Believing in the oneness of Allah is what makes a proper Muslim.'

Candidates constructed good answers to this question by highlighting the importance of the concept of Tawhid in Islam and how that is essential to individual Islamic identity. This belief then is the cornerstone of what it is to be a good and proper Muslim. This then was referred to in the text as the importance of the oneness of Allah often as 'neither begets nor is born' or 'He is Allah [who is] One'. They then offered another point of view by stating other pillars were fundamental to being a proper Muslim such as performing Sawm during Ramadan and so were able to access Level 3. Candidates who only gave one point of view or did not refer to text could not move beyond Level 2 8 marks.

SECTION C – Living the Muslim life today

Question 5

(a) Identify one action that is performed when Muslims pray.

This question was answered well with almost all candidates gaining the one mark available. Most candidates who failed to gain a mark here did not write anything.

(b) Describe the features of Eid-ul-Adha.

Candidates who answered this question well focused on what the features of Eid-ul-Adha are and developed in accordance with the mark scheme to gain the full three marks. Their answers tended to focus on being celebrated during Hajj, wearing new clothes, visiting friends and relatives, saying special prayers, sacrificing a sheep or goat and sharing the meat. Candidates who dropped marks here answered with the reasons as to why the festival is celebrated, Ibrahim being tested to sacrifice Ishmail, rather than the features.

(c) Explain the importance of Laylat al-Qadr for Muslims today.

Candidates who answered this question well did so around the understandings of what happened on this night with the revelation of the Qur'an to Muhammad (pbuh) and so heralded in the age of Islam and the straight path to God. They also highlighted the sanctity of this night and how worshipping on this night has great value, better than a thousand months, that cannot be accessed at any other time on the Islamic calendar and when prayers will be heard and answered.

Developments around these ideas saw the majority of candidates access Level 2 and many access

Level 3. Candidates dropped marks by being more descriptive about the night and so not pointing out enough on why it is important.

(d) 'Giving financial support to those in need is the most pleasing to Allah.'

Candidates who answered this well focused on how it is a requirement to pay Zakah or Khums to help support those in need. To do this then is what is required of each Muslim who is intent on gaining access to Jannah. Candidates referred to the text to back up this point as it states as it is obligated by Allah and some developed this further by explaining only those who could afford to have to give financial aid to those in need. Candidates often countered this point with Salah being most pleasing to Allah and so gained Level 3 marks. Best candidates reached a justified conclusion. Candidates who only focused on one side to the statement without an alternate viewpoint or failed to refer to the text were limited to Level 2 8 marks maximum. Less development meant lower marks.

Question 6

(a) Identify one purpose of marriage for Muslims.

This question saw almost all candidates gaining the one mark available mostly through having children. Candidates who failed to gain a mark were those who did not attempt to answer it.

(b) Describe Muslim beliefs about good leadership in the community.

Candidates who answered this well highlighted that good leaders act to support all the community in line with Islamic teaching, ensuring all feel cared for and guiding them according to Islamic etiquette and responsibility along with following the example of the Prophet. Candidates who dropped marks gave isolated points of information and so lacked development which limited marks.

(c) Explain the importance of Hajj for Muslims.

Candidates answered this well by developing answers that highlighted the importance of Hajj as a pillar of Islam. They then developed this further by highlighting how different aspects of the Hajj enabled pilgrims to travel deeply on an inward spiritual journey that brought them closer to Allah and that they were born anew from their experience. Good development here saw most candidates accessing Level 2 and many gaining Level 3 marks. Candidates dropped marks by being too descriptive in the Hajj journey and not developing why it is important

(d) 'All key Muslim beliefs are contained in the Shahadah.'

Candidates who answered this well focused on the Shahadah as the first pillar of Islam and how everything then fundamentally flows from this understanding of "There is no god but Allah, and Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah." Candidates developed this by showing how the Shahadah is incorporated into daily prayer and is often used as part of the call to prayer. They then referred to the text to highlight there is no deity, but Allah and he takes account of a Muslim's belief and actions. Candidates then countered this with other key beliefs such as the six articles of faith and thereby gained Level 3 marks. Highest-scoring candidates reached a balanced conclusion.

Candidates who only gave one point of view or did not refer to text were limited to a maximum of Level 2 8 marks, depending on development.

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 one mark.
- 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 Level 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 level 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

