



Examiners' Report

Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2024

Pearson Edexcel International GCSE  
In Religious Studies (4RS1) Paper 2D

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## **Principal Examiner's Report for Paper 4RS1\_2D Islam**

### **General Introduction**

Once again this year there has been a large entry of candidates for what is now called 4RS1\_2D Islam, following the decision to split Paper 2 into its component religions.

Here are a few initial general observations about this year's Paper, some of which will be exemplified further, later in the Report.

- Candidates are required to answer all questions in the paper, and this seemed to be generally well understood.
- Candidates usually wrote appropriate amounts in their responses, within the spaces provided. A significant number of candidates, however, did use extra paper.
- On this Paper, the different question types have different demands. For example, a) questions test Assessment Objective 1 whereas the c) questions are much more directed towards testing AO2.
- The majority of this year's candidate cohort appeared well prepared for the examination in terms of their knowledge, understanding and willingness to engage with questions as written.
- There was little evidence of candidates being unable to complete the paper in the allocated time. Sometimes, when candidates did fail to finish the Paper, it may have been because they spent too much time on questions, such as a) questions, that did not need as much development.

Teachers and Centres may well find it helpful to look at the Principal Examiner's Report for each of the other religions, as there may be points made there about a specific question that will have more general application.

### **Comments on specific question types**

#### **a) Questions**

These questions are worth up to 4 marks, 2 each for two developed responses. The command word is always 'Outline', though it is important to look for the further indicator of what is being requested. This could therefore be 'Outline two ways', 'two features', 'two reasons', or a number of other similar terms. The key requirement for gaining full marks is development. In each case the response must be developed in a way that furthers the understanding of the response given, and which responds to the question.

## **b) Questions**

These questions are worth up to 6 marks, and the marks are awarded in accordance with two Levels: Level 1 being worth up to 3 marks, and Level 2 from 4 to 6 marks. The requirements for these levels can be found in the current Mark Scheme, and they do not change from one series to the next. In order to gain marks in the higher Level 2, candidates must demonstrate the ability to develop their responses (for 4 marks) and, furthermore, to demonstrate a deeper understanding of the topic (for 5 or 6 marks).

## **c) Questions**

These questions are worth up to 10 marks, and the marks are awarded in accordance with four Levels: Level 1 being worth up to 3 marks, and Level 2 from 4 to 6 marks, Level 3 allocates 7 or 8 marks, and Level 4 allocates 9 or 10 marks. The requirements for these levels can be found in the current Mark Scheme, and they do not change from one series to the next. In order to gain marks in the higher Levels 3 and 4, candidates must demonstrate the ability to develop their responses, demonstrate a deeper understanding of the topic, and also the ability to evaluate two points of view to arrive at a justified conclusion.

Currently the rubrics for c) questions allow candidates to refer to other religions. It is important for candidates to be aware that such references can only be rewarded when there is a clear attempt to explain why the experience of another religion might be significant for the religion being examined.

### **General issues per question type that may restrict candidates' marks.**

On a) questions, the most usual weakness in candidate responses is the lack of development, where only one or more simple responses are given. Such responses cannot earn more than 2 marks in total. Another occasional weakness is when candidates give features, for example, when they are asked for reasons. It is important to pay attention to that changeable key word.

On b) questions, many candidates do develop their answers and achieve Level 2, 4 marks. However, there is then a tendency for these simply developed responses to be multiplied, rather than explained in greater depth, thereby candidates limiting themselves to 4 marks.

On c) questions, again many candidates do develop their responses. However, an answer that says that some believers would propose arguments a, b and c, but other believers would argue x, y and z – without any attempt to demonstrate a deeper understanding or to evaluate the different points of view – is unlikely to go beyond the top of Level 2.

## **Strengths and Weaknesses of approaches to specific questions.**

### **Section 1 focuses on Origins and their impact on the community**

#### **1a ‘Outline two ways the sunnah of the Prophet is important for Muslims.’**

This proved a straightforward question for most candidates, who were familiar with the sunnah of the Prophet, and the role it plays in the lives of Muslims. Some candidates were able to refer to specific examples of the guidance it provides, whilst others wrote more generally. Both approaches were credited.

#### **1b ‘Explain why the Shari’ah is important in the daily lives of Muslims.’**

For some this question was more of a challenge. Most candidates knew what the Shari’ah is, but not all of them were able to develop their answers. Some gave specific examples of laws such as Halal rules and the rules about intoxicating drinks, but without development, which limited their marks. Better answers were able to write in more depth about why the Shari’ah in general has importance, such as the clarity it can bring to moral and legal questions that have arisen since the time of the Prophet, and how that can help Muslims to be confident they are behaving as Allah would wish.

#### **1c Discuss the suggestion that ‘The final sermon contains Muhammad’s most important teachings’**

It was pleasing to see how many candidates were aware of the teachings contained in the final sermon, and many were also able to highlight it as a summary of the ideas that Muhammad wanted to stress before his death. Some were also able to synthesise these into teachings about fidelity, unity and respecting each other. Equally there was an awareness of the more comprehensive guidance provided by hadith, and by the sunnah in general. There were some candidates who were not sufficiently aware of the final sermon to be able to answer this question effectively.

### **Section 2 focuses on Celebration and Pilgrimage.**

#### **2a ‘Outline two ways Eid ul-Adha is celebrated by Muslims.’**

Most candidates are aware of Eid ul-Adha and Eid ul-Fitr, though in exam conditions they do sometimes get them confused, as happened in this case for a few candidates. On the positive side, such relevant answers as commemorating Ibrahim and Ishmael were often given, and examiners also credited more general answers, such as prayer and shared meals.

### **2b 'Explain how the celebration of Eid ul-Fitr shows its importance to Muslims.'**

The structure of this question asked candidates to refer to aspects of the celebration of Eid ul-Fitr and use them as a way of explaining the importance of the festival. An example might be the celebratory meal, which can then highlight the sense of achievement for having observed Ramadan, or generosity, which is such a key aspect of Islam, in sharing that meal with others. However, unless the link to Eid was made clear, explanations of the importance of Ramadan did not answer the question.

### **2c Discuss the suggestion that 'Going on hajj is the best way to unite the Muslim community'.**

Marks were available in this question for answers that focused on the general benefits of hajj. However, the question had a specific slant, namely on whether hajj is the best way to unite the ummah. It is unlikely that candidates who failed to address this point would have progressed above Level 2. Those that responded to this specific question were able to write about the experience of equality on hajj, and of sharing the hardships as well as the joys. On the other side of the argument, many pointed out that, for many, hajj is a once in a lifetime event, and that gathering for Jum'a prayers, for example, might be a better vehicle for unifying the Muslim community. The specific demand of this question made it a more challenging one for some candidates.

## **Section 3 focuses on Worship and Practice.**

### **3a 'Outline two internal features of a mosque.'**

This was well answered, except that a small number of candidates misread the question and answered by referring to external features. Examiners did credit features that exist inside and outside, such as a dome, and also where practice might vary, such as the location of the place for performing wudu. Nevertheless, it was an object lesson in reading the question carefully.

### **3b 'Explain why worship in the home is important for Muslims.'**

This was also a well answered question. Most answers focused on two key ideas. Firstly it was pointed out that worship at home can include the entire family, including mother and children, and that it is both a good example and a source of family unity. Secondly there is the aspect of continuous prayer, which does not have special days or special places, and that Muslims can pray at home when they awaken and in the evening, cultivating an awareness of Allah at all times.

### **3c Discuss the suggestion that 'Jum'a prayers are the most important aspect of Muslim worship'**

This question invites a contrast, between Jum'a prayers and other aspects of Muslim worship, such as regular salat. It called for an understanding of why gathering for Jum'a prayers has its own importance. Many were able to focus on that, mentioning that it is commanded in the Qur'an, it follows the example of the Prophet and that, by asking Muslims to stop all they are going to attend the prayer, it exemplifies the priority of worship of Allah. Some candidates demonstrated knowledge of what happens at Jum'a prayers, but were often descriptive, and not always able to provide this kind of explanation. Such descriptive answers would, at best achieve Level 2 marks.

#### **Summary and Recommendations to Centres to improve candidate performance**

- Candidates should be encouraged to develop their responses. On Paper 2 they will always add value to their response if they further describe, illustrate or explain their answer.
- Candidates are reminded that any number of simply developed responses to b) questions can gain only a maximum of 4 marks, and that a demonstration of depth of understanding is required to gain the higher marks.
- In b) and c) questions, some description can help to develop a response, such as description of pilgrimage sites or aspects of worship. However, to gain higher marks, answers must be followed by an attempt to draw out their deeper meaning.
- Candidates should only spend time explaining the point of view of another religion if they are confident they can show how that helps to provide a better understanding of the religion being examined

