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Examiners' Report  
June 2017

GCE Religious Studies 8RS0 4D

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## **Introduction**

It is pleasing that candidates generally accessed the paper well. Most responded to the challenges resulting from the change of style, where answers were required for all questions.

Advice for future candidates is listed in the Summary.

## Question 1

Answers that were awarded marks in level three explored key ideas of angels as one of the Six Beliefs and gave accounts that were detailed and accurate.

These referred to the ideas associated with angels who have been created by Allah for a specific purpose and to obey him. Many referred to the wide range of tasks carried out by angels and made special mention of Jibreel's role in Allah's revelation to Muhammad and the role of other named angels in a Muslim's life, death and judgement.

Some weaker answers were brief, reflecting a narrow range of knowledge whilst others contained lists about angels with insufficient explanation and failed to relate their points to key ideas.

Some candidates did not answer this question at all whilst others wrote one or two lines only.

To gain level three, candidates must use material that reflects a full knowledge of the topic.

Topic: 1. **Religious beliefs, values and teachings.** 1.1 Specification of Islam

Trigger Word: **Explore.** Specification for Religious Studies Appendix 1 Page 77

### 1 Explore the ideas associated with angels as one of the Six Beliefs.

The belief in angels is the 2nd beliefs. Allah has said to have created angels out of pure light and were created to be his servants. Angels do not have any human attributes and don't eat, sleep nor drink. They get their nourishment from worshipping God. It is also said that angels do not have a gender nor can be seen by the naked eye unless they want people to see them like angel jibreel in the night of power revealing himself to the prophet Muhammad. Angels in Islam don't have free will therefore don't have the power to disobey God. It is said that some angels have 70,000 wings and 70,000 mouths and can be huge and tall (Nasab). In Islam there is no hierarchy of angels but there are specific angels who were created for specific jobs such as the angel jibreel is entrusted in given divine revelations to messengers, Mikail (Michael)

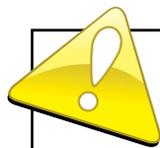
is entrusted with sustain every living thing and rain and thumed, Israfil is entrusted with blowing the trumpeted on the day of judgement and Azrail is the angel of death who takes a soul out of a body. We believe that we have two angels on our shoulders to record all the good and bad deeds we have done. The devil is not an angel he is a jinn therefore has free will.



**ResultsPlus**

**Examiner Comments**

The candidate uses a wide range of accurate knowledge, specialist language and terminology appropriately.



**ResultsPlus**

**Examiner Tip**

Read the question carefully and select main points, giving a full, though concise account. AO1 material only. Plan your answer.

As first item

1 Explore the ideas associated with angels as one of the Six Beliefs.

Angels (Malikah) is one of the foundational and fundamental key beliefs in Islam. It's the 2nd part of belief in the key beliefs of Islam. They are significant as the Quran mentions them in the hereafter (akhirah) for the day of judgement by Allah. // another idea associated with angels is the significance of the angel jibril during the night of power where the first revelation was revealed to Muhammad. This shows them

to be a messenger from God and shows clear signs. // Another key feature of angels is that in the Quran it is said that God is made from light, and it's mentioned that angels are also made from light. This shows that the angels are made from the purest source and therefore a true messenger from God. // Another key idea associated with angels is their involvement in Heaven + Hell, that no angels on judgement day look at the deeds of humans and decide whether they are worthy of heaven or sentenced to hell. // Angels are also described to be less than humans in the Quran.

(Total for Question 1 = 8 marks)



**ResultsPlus**  
Examiner Comments

As first item



**ResultsPlus**  
Examiner Tip

As first item

## Question 2

Answers awarded marks in level three focused on the question, giving a full, detailed and accurate account of how the 'Night of Power' was important for an understanding of Muhammad as Prophet. These contained explanations showing the significance of Muhammad being given the Qur'an, receiving the authority of a Prophet and being the 'Seal of the Prophets'.

Weaker answers were brief and described the 'Night of Power' rather than showing why this was important for understanding Muhammad and his role as Prophet. To improve such answers candidates need to focus on the implications of the question. In addition, accuracy, detail, assessment and evaluation are all vital. A few candidates wrote about the 'Night Journey' which was incorrect for this question whilst others either omitted the question or wrote only one or two lines.

Topic: **Sources of Wisdom and Authority:** 2.1f of the Islam Specification.

Trigger Word: **Assess.** Appendix 1: Command word definitions. Religious Studies Specification Page 77.

### 2 Assess the importance of the Night of Power for an understanding of Muhammad as the Prophet.

The Night of Power was when angel Gabriel visited ~~Prophet~~ Muhammad and he had the first revelation given to ~~of~~ him of the Qur'an. This is of great importance because it can be marked as the first time Islam was being revealed and the time that a nation was beginning to reconnect to Islam.

The Night of Power is of great importance for an understanding of Muhammad as the Prophet because he is the 'seal of prophets' as the final book was revealed to him linking in with the key beliefs. The ~~the~~ first revelation or ~~any~~ of

The revelation can only be given to someone who was worthy and had the ability to deliver such messages across a nation for that it had to be a chosen one, Muhammad led up to the event can be seen as the making of a Prophet. However the Hijrah can be of greater importance of Muhammad as the Prophet because it was when Islam was being preached as a religion in Medina and not just his family and close friends. And it is officially deemed as the beginning of Islam. The Night of Power is of great importance and as it was when God made contact with humans.



**ResultsPlus**  
Examiners' Comments

This demonstrates an understanding that the Night of Power was 'a reconnection' between man and Allah. The candidate goes on to discuss whether the events following the Night of Power are also important for an understanding of Muhammad as Prophet.



**ResultsPlus**  
Examiner Tip

This requires AO1 and AO2 material.  
Use detailed, clear and concise information.  
Plan your answer.

As first item.

**2 Assess the importance of the Night of Power for an understanding of Muhammad as the Prophet.**

The Night of Power can be seen as one of the most important events in Islam as it was when the angel Jibril first revealed the Qur'an to Muhammad in a cave in Mount Hira. This is said to be the revelation of the direct word of Allah for Muslims to follow. ~~Qur'an, meaning recite~~, Muhammad was told to recite (Qur'an) by angel Jibril but being illiterate explained he could not. Somehow with the help of the angel he was able and this is described as the first revelation. This night is <sup>important</sup> ~~significant~~ for Muslims because the Qur'an is the main basis of Islam as a religion providing things such as laws and beliefs. It helps provide an understanding of Muhammad as a prophet as it was revealed to him alone, ~~stain~~ representing Allah's belief in him.

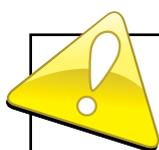
Some argue that Muhammad's last sermon was more ~~significant~~ important as it was the final revelation where Allah stated that the religion had been "perfected", and it is clear then that Muhammad was to be the last of the prophets: "The seal of prophets". However ~~the nig~~ the Night of Power is when Muhammad was first understood as a prophet and is therefore

of vital importance in Islam. His fear and shock of the religious experience he encountered lends the story credibility, and his gradual understanding of what Allah wanted from him as a prophet.



**ResultsPlus**  
Examiner Comments

As first item



**ResultsPlus**  
Examiner Tip

As first item

### Question 3

Answers awarded marks in level three focused upon the question and demonstrated a full knowledge and understanding of the terms Halal and Haram. They emphasised the significance of these for a Muslim's beliefs and practices, giving examples and explaining that they were commands from Allah found in the Qur'an and Sunnah that must be obeyed because they would be asked about them on Judgement Day.

Weaker answers were brief and described Halal and Haram rather than assessing their importance. Some candidates restricted their answers to Halal and Haram food. Many produced very brief answers that reflected narrow and generalised knowledge.

Topic: **Sources of wisdom and authority** 2.3c. Islam Specification.

Trigger word: **Assess**. Religious Studies Specification Appendix 1: Command word definition page 77.

3 Assess the importance of halal and haram for Muslim beliefs and practices. -shar'iah law

Muslim beliefs and practices are shaped around halal meaning what is allowed and haram meaning what is forbidden. With the Qur'an and hadith indicating what is allowed or forbidden Muslims can focus practices on this. Halal and haram is very important within Muslim beliefs and practices as it can impact significantly on what happens on judgement day or yawm al-muddin for example. The practices a Muslim follows determines if they go to jannat or jannah, which is a key belief within Islam. Muslims believe life is a test for the Akhirah, so following halal and haram helps Muslims get there. This demonstrates the extent of its importance.

Halal and haram is important for Muslim

beliefs and practices because it is expressed in the Qur'an and Hadith as part of sunnah meaning Muhammad's example. As the Qur'an is the word of God, Muslims must use this as the basis of beliefs and practices. Furthermore, the hadith related to the Qur'an is important in adding commentary to the Qur'an on halal and haram. These both, the Qur'an and hadith, are used to form shari'ah law which is the Muslim law. As this outlines what is halal and haram, all aspects of a Muslim's life it demonstrates the significance of halal and haram.



**ResultsPlus**  
Examiner Comments

This Candidate explains the terms, clearly relating Halal and Haram with the commands of Allah in the Qur'an and the Sunnah of the Prophet and emphasises the link between these beliefs and Judgement Day.



**ResultsPlus**  
Examiner Tip

AO1 and AO2 material required.  
Plan your answer.

Same as first item.

3 Assess the importance of halal and haram for Muslim beliefs and practices.

The concepts of halal and haram are were created by humans, these are called sharia laws. These ideas come from high sources of authority such as the Qur'an, hadiths (what Muhammad said) and Sunnah's (what Muhammad did).

Halal and haram allow for Muslims to follow the right way of life and have the right morals. This is significantly important as it influences the way people go about their lives. // An example of halal is

where it says in the Qur'an that "meat that should only be eaten where Allah has blessed upon thee", this "where animals are killed in a specific way to ensure they don't feel pain as they have been blessed upon Allah. This is important as in practice Muslims restrict themselves to only eat meat that is considered "halal" or "blessed"

// In the 2nd surah (Al-Baqara) there are mentions of moral actions and how to go about life. In this surah, "gambling" + "alcohol" are seen as a sin and should not be partaken by Muslims. These acts are considered haram and are completely

wrong as for example, gambling may stop someone giving charity (Zakat), one of the fundamental Muslim practices, the idea of haram allows or clear guidance to keep clear of wrong actions. // Another idea associated with haram is Mekruh, although things such as smoking are looked down upon as Allah states in the Quran that you shouldn't harm your body but its your choice if you want to or Allah gave us free will.



**ResultsPlus**  
Examiner Comments

As first item



**ResultsPlus**  
Examiner Tip

As first item

## Question 4

Stronger answers focused on the question and demonstrated an excellent knowledge of details of both key beliefs and practices relating to salah. These explained the compulsory nature of practising salah, the number of times it is required each day and other occasions when salah played an important part. In addition, reference was made to details of the actions involved in this Pillar. Some candidates also explained the differences between Sunni and Shi'a Muslims that affect this practice.

Weaker answers tended to be brief and descriptive and sometimes referred only to practices. Some candidates omitted to answer the question whilst others wrote only two or three lines as an answer.

### Question 4b (This question attracts 20 marks)

Those achieving marks in Level 4 successfully focused upon the question, demonstrating a full knowledge of religious and social values in both Pre-Islamic Arabia and Islam. The features of Pre-Islamic Arabia's polytheism and Islamic monotheism were discussed and contrasted, as were the characteristics of the earlier tribes and the Muslim Umma. Their social values such as attitudes towards slaves and women were compared.

Weaker answers tended to be shorter, descriptive and lacking focus on key social and religious differences between Pre-Islamic Arabia and Islam. The quality of answers was variable, and candidates in the lower levels did not include AO2 material which requires discussion and debate.

4a) Topic: **Practices that shape and express religious identity.** 3.1b, 1.1c Islam Specification.

Trigger word: **Explore.** See Appendix 1 Command word definitions page 77 Religious Studies Specification.

4b) Topic: **Sources of wisdom and authority** 2.1b, 2.1c, 2.1e in Islam Specification.

Trigger word: **Analyse.** See Appendix 1. Command word definitions page 77 Religious Studies Specification.

4 (a) Explore the key beliefs and practices relating to salah (prayer).

(8)

Salah is one of the five pillars of Islam and it is considered the second most important after ~~salah~~ the Shahadah. Muslims believe that we must pray 5 times at different times a day and are; Fajr, Dhur, Asr, Maghrib and Isha. This practice is significant to Muslim practice and Muslims believe that those who do ~~an~~

not perform Salah are considered disbelievers as it is an obligatory act of worship. Therefore to remain muslim, ~~you~~ one must pray 5 times a day consistently. Another key belief relating to Salah is that all muslims must perform in the same direction which is towards the Ka'bah and muslims must aim not to delay Salah. As well as this muslims believe to actually perform prayer, one must purify themselves through the act of wudu. This is to purify themselves as they stand before Allah. Furthermore within the Salah muslims recite verses of the Qur'an with Surah al-Fatiha being the only Surah which constantly repeated during every rakat of Salah.

(b) Analyse the key differences between pre-Islamic Arabia and Islam, with reference to religious and social values.

(20)

Religiously, Pre-Islamic Arabia was predominantly a polytheistic area and many of the polytheists were apart of the Quraysh tribe. As well as polytheism many nomads were animistic and belief in Jinn was extremely common. Many of the members of the Quraysh would house idols in the Ka'bah and used it for pilgrimage. This ~~was~~ differs from Islam as it is a monotheistic religion and so opposes the

polytheistic nature of Pre-Islamic Arabia. Islam preaches that there is only one God, Allah and that he ~~has no~~ "begets not, nor is begotten" as ~~stated~~ stated in the Qur'an. This concept is central to Islam as Tawhid rejects shirk and any association with Allah. Although polytheists did acknowledge Allah as the supreme God, they associated partners with him through idol-worship which is strictly forbidden in Islam and the only sin, Allah, will not forgive. This is therefore a key difference between pre-Islamic Arabia and Islam in terms of monotheism opposing polytheism.

On the other hand, in religious terms, there are also many similarities between pre-Islamic Arabia and Islam, specifically the tradition of pilgrimage. ~~It~~ It is ~~no~~ stated that "pagan pilgrims would often bring idols to the Ka'bah in worship" (LINGS). Although how pilgrimage is performed differs, it can be argued that this act of pilgrimage influenced the development of Islam as Hajj demonstrates how Muslims circle around the Ka'bah, the common theme being the significance of the Ka'bah to both pre-Islamic Arabia and Islam.

Furthermore a common monotheistic belief which influenced and is similar to Islam is Zoroastrianism. Zoroastrianism does differ from Islam as believers of Zoroastrianism believe in the duality of God as both good and evil which is rejected in Islam. However similarities include praying 5 times a day, performing wudu or a ritual to purify ~~oneself~~ themselves before praying and fasting. Thus in this aspect it can be argued Pre-Islamic Arabia and Islam are similar in religious terms.

Socially, pre-Islamic Arabia ~~was~~ had no centralised government or laws to govern behaviour. It was ruled through tribal systems and this meant that any action could be ~~done~~ committed with no real consequence. For example "women were considered the estate of men as they did not contribute to society - (ARMSTRONG)." This shows how pre-Islamic Arabia was a widely patriarchal society with women treated as inferior and the poor left to die. There was also a clear divide between the rich and poor with Quraysh being the most powerful tribe. This ~~differs~~ differs from Islam as there was no sense of equality, whereas

women are seen as equals to men in Islam. Moreover Islam encourages the distribution of wealth so that there is no divide which is a key belief known as zakat. This ensures fairness and equality.

On the other hand Islam has taken language and literature from pre-Islamic Arabia, showing similarities. This is evident as Arabic was widely spoken in pre-Islamic Arabia and the language of the Quran is in Arabic.

In conclusion I believe Islam drastically differs from pre-Islamic Arabia as although it may have been influenced by pre-Islamic Arabia, it rejects many key practices and beliefs which were common in pre-Islamic Arabia. For example polytheism, infanticide and the poor treatment of women and the poor.



### ResultsPlus Examiner Comments

4a) The candidate accurately addresses a wide range of beliefs and practices relating to salah, using a broad range of specialist language.

4b) The candidate demonstrates a wide range of knowledge, specialist language and terminology; reasoned judgements are supported by appropriate evidence.



### ResultsPlus Examiner Tip

4a) Give full and accurate material but be concise. AO1 Material only.

4b) Read the question carefully. AO1 and AO2 Material.

Plan your answers.

4 (a) Explore the key beliefs and practices relating to salah (prayer).

(8)

Salah is the second pillar of Islam and refers to the ritual prayer done by Muslims when worshipping Allah. This act is compulsory for all Muslims once at the age (after puberty). It is important in Islam as it brings Muslims closer to Allah and allows a form of indirect communication to occur. In order to make a Salah one must have the correct/good intention to please God; also a Muslim must state their intention (niyah) in order to distinguish this form of worship from others. The action must be done in the correct steps. In the Quran, a passage might highlight how originally Allah order their to be 50 prayers, daily but the prophet Muhammad (PBUH) asked for that to be reduced after discussion with Musa (Moses) (AS), now <sup>there</sup> are 5 compulsory daily prayers for Muslims to do. The act of salah differs between Muslims, Sunni Muslims chose to follow the example of the prophet Muhammad and pray 5 times a day, whereas Shia Muslims combine the 5 prayers into 3 extended prayers and do ~~the~~ sajdah (prostration) on a piece of wood/clay. Regardless all Muslims pray in the direction of the Qibla/Khabah.

(b) Analyse the key differences between pre-Islamic Arabia and Islam, with reference to religious and social values.

(20)

Pre-Islamic Arabia was a time/age of ~~great~~ ignorance, also called Jahiliyah. The context of the lifestyle differs ~~severely~~ from the message spread by prophet Muhammad regarding Islam.

Social context of pre-Islamic ~~Arab~~ Arabia consisted of a male-dominated and patriarchal society, in which women were regarded second class citizens and female infants were buried alive. The number of wives a man could have was limitless and after his death his son would 'inherit' them, besides his own mother. The ~~message of Islam~~ <sup>acts of</sup> drinking alcohol, gambling and prostitution were highly common in these times. However, the message of Islam rejects this social context by shining a light on how the sinful acts being committed are wrong and go against Islam/Allah. ~~and~~ The impact the message of Islam had on these 'rituals' and acts was the equal ~~to~~ treatment of men and women but also ~~under~~ the prohibition of sinful acts such as alcoholism and prostitution.

The political structure in these times was non-existent. Pre-Islamic ~~at~~ Arabia consisted of

tribal groups led by a locally elected elder as chief. The law system was based on a vendetta arrangement, as there were no laws, courts or police people had to take matters into their own hands and gain vengeance/revenge themselves. Islam rejected ~~the~~<sup>this</sup> political system by promoting a conflict free environment to live. Prophet Muhammad established a state when in Medina and therefore allowed there to be a justice system that was based on teachings of Islam.

In pre-Islamic Arabia the religious context was very complicated. There were several religious groups that were later rejected by Islam. The act of polytheism, worship of several Gods, was highly common and the Kaabah was home to over 360 different worshiped idols. A form of polytheism includes animism, ~~atheistic~~ which believes that non-human entities consist of super-natural abilities (similar to Hinduism) furthermore, there were larger religious groups, still common today, such as Jews and Christians, who similarly to Muslims believe in one God but believe he is not completely transcendent. Moreover a group established a Zoroastrianism believed in a single God called the Wise Lord who sent his

revelation to the prophet Zoroaster. Islam rejects many/most of the religious context of the time by promoting Tawhid (unity/creeds of Allah) and the message of monotheism.

After the message of Islam was established on a wide scale in Arabia, the idols were removed from the Ka'bah and many groups converted to Islam and believed in the message that ~~from~~ ~~prophet~~ ~~Muhammad~~ Prophet Muhammad was teaching.

To conclude, it is evident that the message of Islam rejected the nature of the religious, political and social context of pre-Islamic Arabia and overall was influential enough to replace many traditions of the time with the message of Islam.



## **Paper summary**

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

- all questions must be answered
- questions must be answered fully, not cursorily
- be aware of specialist language
- plan their answers carefully
- focus on the implications of the questions set
- accuracy, detail and evaluation are essential
- make careful use of the time available.

## Grade Boundaries

Grade boundaries for this, and all other papers, can be found on the website on this link:

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