

A LEVEL

Examiners' report

RELIGIOUS STUDIES

H573


For first teaching in 2016


H573/04 Summer 2019 series

Version 1

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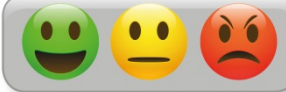
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Introduction

Our examiners' reports are produced to offer constructive feedback on candidates' performance in the examinations. They provide useful guidance for future candidates. The reports will include a general commentary on candidates' performance, identify technical aspects examined in the questions and highlight good performance and where performance could be improved. The reports will also explain aspects which caused difficulty and why the difficulties arose, whether through a lack of knowledge, poor examination technique, or any other identifiable and explainable reason.

Where overall performance on a question/question part was considered good, with no particular areas to highlight, these questions have not been included in the report. A full copy of the question paper can be downloaded from OCR.

Paper 4 series overview

The Developments in Islamic Thought paper assesses the AO1 and AO2 skills of knowledge and understanding and evaluation/analysis. To do well in this paper candidates needed to show that they were fully in control of the question. They could do this by demonstrating a very good level of knowledge and understanding of the topics covered and be able to discuss them confidently. Their evaluation skills needed to show development and critical analysis.

Candidates that did well on this paper exhibited either good depth or breadth of knowledge, with a few showing both breadth and depth – these were the candidates who achieved a Level 6. Candidates who did less well on this paper exhibited a fairly superficial level of knowledge of the topics covered. They also lacked the appropriate skills of critical analysis.

Question 1

1* To what extent do Qur'anic teachings encourage religious tolerance?

[40]

This was a reasonably popular question and responses covered a range of levels. The majority of candidates achieved between Levels 3 and 5. A small number of responses achieved the highest level with a relatively small number being given the lowest levels. Overall candidates could have benefited from a greater level of knowledge of specific Qur'anic teachings on religious tolerance.

AO1: The majority of candidates knew of the Qur'anic quote referring to 'no compulsion in religion' and were able to discuss, to some extent, the implications of this for religious tolerance. The question was asking candidates to focus on tolerance of other religions (religious tolerance). The weaker responses were those which used a more general definition of religious tolerance – taking it to mean tolerance within Islam generally. This can be seen in the candidate's response in Exemplar 1. These candidates were unlikely to get higher than a Level 3 as they were addressing the general topic rather than focusing on the specific question.

The stronger candidates were those who exhibited a wide-ranging knowledge of Qur'anic quotes/teachings on religious tolerance – demonstrating breadth. A few candidates also showed good depth of knowledge by explaining the differing ways that one teaching might be interpreted.

AO2: There were some excellent responses giving detailed arguments on both sides of the debate. Others needed to provide a wider range of arguments or develop them further. The stronger responses showed a good understanding of how human interpretation may result in the same quote being used for both sides of the argument. They were able to develop these by giving specific examples. A significant number of candidates used the 'people of the book' to argue that the Qur'anic teachings do encourage religious tolerance. Only a few developed this by highlighting the fact that this teaching is only relevant to Jews and Christians not other faiths and what this might mean for religious tolerance.

Exemplar 1

All religions promote teachings of tolerance and patience regarding various aspects of life. For example, tolerance should be practiced in every day life i.e. in marriage, with family and friends. Tolerance should be practiced in teaching others and when calling them towards the religion. Tolerance should be especially practiced through the dealing we have with others. Islam does not promote

violence. Muslims are expected to live in harmony with others and to not violate the rights of an individual. However, in situations where ~~there~~ justice is not being effectively practiced, Muslims have a duty to bring an end to this. A hadith of the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) states that "if a Muslim sees any act of injustice/oppression, they should try to stop it with their tongue. If they cannot do ~~so~~ so, ~~then~~ then they should stop it with their hand. If they are still unable to do this, then they ~~should~~ should stop it with their heart."

Question 2

2* 'Without the angel Jibril, God's messages could not have been communicated.' Discuss. [40]

This was answered by a significant number of candidates, the majority of whom had at least a reasonable understanding of Jibril's role in Muhammad's pbuh revelations.

AO1: The majority of candidates appeared to have a reasonably sound understanding of the importance of angels in Islam. It was also clear that most had a good understanding of the role Jibril played in revealing the Qur'an. Some of the weaker responses focused too much on just giving a narrative description of the revelations. This limited the marks they were given as this misses the point of the question.

The strongest responses were from those candidates who also demonstrated a knowledge of the message given to previous prophets and Jibril's role in these.

AO2: Candidates answers covered the range of levels, with a small number reaching a Level 6 for evaluation and analysis. The best responses provided a variety of arguments covering both sides of the debate or were able to develop a few arguments in greater depth. Quite a few candidates discussed the nature of God and how his omnipotence enabled him to communicate His messages with or without angels. There were, however, a greater number of arguments for the quote than there were against it with some only arguing this side of the debate. This showed that not all candidates fully understood the demands of the question. Critical analysis could have been strengthened by discussing how the nature of angels may have been an important factor, especially in the delivery of Muhammad's pbuh message.

Those achieving the highest level also demonstrated an appreciation of how, arguably, a variety of factors all played their part in the delivery of God's message – not just the angel Jibril.

Question 3

3* Assess the view that women were of little importance in early Islam.

[40]

This was a popular question with a few candidates writing excellent responses, gaining a Level 6 for both the AO1 and the AO2 elements. The majority of candidates clearly had a sound knowledge of the position of women during the days of ignorance (jahiliyya). A number of the weaker responses focused more/solely on the position of women in Islam generally.

AO1: Most candidates demonstrated, at least, a reasonable knowledge of the social status of women during the days of ignorance and were able to give some evidence as to how this was improved in early Islam. In order to get higher marks, however, some candidates could have avoided too much narrative and summarised their points more successfully.

The weakest responses talked primarily about the position of women in Islam generally, with little or no reference to early Islam, as can be seen in this Exemplar 2.

A significant number of responses demonstrated a good understanding of how some of Muhammad's pbuh wives (Khadijah, Hafsa and Aishah) could be used to illustrate the importance of women in early Islam. A few candidates also referred to Qur'anic teachings on the issue. While this wasn't essential it showed breadth of knowledge making higher marks more likely.

AO2: Candidates that didn't reach the higher Levels (5 & 6) would have benefited from a greater variety of arguments on both sides of the debate. A large number of candidates used the example of the Prophet's pbuh wives to support the argument that women weren't of little importance in early Islam. This argument could have been developed further by contrasting their position with the position of women generally in early Islam. This was something that the stronger candidates were able to do and in doing so demonstrated a greater level of critical analysis.

Exemplar 2

Some people argue that women are of little importance in Islam because the Quran permits the beating of ~~his~~ your wife. In a Quranic passage the word "~~darb~~ ^{darb}darb" is used in context of when fighting with your spouse. It teaches us that if ^{you have} ~~you have~~ ~~any~~ other need and it's still not working, you can hit your wife. The same is not said where a woman can hit a man. This shows the unfairness in Islam because it shows that women are of little importance. However, ^{Some scholars} ~~people~~ argue that the word "darb" had -actually been translated wrongly by the people. There are ~~no~~ ^{in fact} other translations of the word "darb". For example, in the context of the passage in the Quran, "darb" could mean its "separate" showing that when having a fight couples should leave ~~each other~~ ^{each other} alone and give themselves some time. This would also make more sense than beating your wife instead. Therefore, women are of great importance in Islam.

Some people may argue that Islam oppresses women by having them cover up. Muslim women are bound to feel pressured or ^{is} ~~is~~ ~~blamed~~ ^{blamed} in their communities if they don't

wear the hijab or remove it. This could make them feel forced to cover up when they don't want. Men also don't cover up as much as women and aren't expected. Women are only able to be seen without a ~~scarf~~ Scarf when with their family or spouse. This could be argued that this is a way to control them and keep them as just another man's property. Therefore women are of ~~little~~ ^{little} importance in Islam. However, others may argue that the hijab makes women feel liberated. They are not seen as the object of sexual desires and so makes them feel comfortable. Unlike in the western world where women may feel harassed. Therefore, women are of great importance in Islam.

In conclusion, women ~~are~~ ^{are} of ^{great} ~~great~~ importance in Islam because the ~~Quran~~ ^{Quran} teaches is to respect women and to protect them. However ~~others~~ others may argue that women aren't given rights in Islam and are oppressed.

Question 4

4* Critically assess the view that secularisation is a threat to the Muslim world.

[40]

This was the least popular of the four questions, however, a reasonable number of candidates did opt to answer it. A few candidates were not entirely sure of what secularisation meant and this clearly had an effect on their total marks. Overall, a greater use of specific examples illustrating the impact of secularisation on the Muslim world would have been beneficial.

AO1: The majority of candidates were able to confidently explain what secularisation was, however, there were a small number of candidates who couldn't. This clearly impacted on the number of marks that they were able to achieve.

Overall most candidates would have benefited from a greater knowledge and understanding of the Muslim world as a combination of Islamic states, secular Muslim states and the Muslim diaspora living in secular Western states. A small minority of responses did refer to these three and by doing so demonstrated a comprehensive understanding of the issue. It was these candidates who achieved the highest levels.

Candidates who scored lower were unable to refer to specific examples/case studies of secularisation and indicate how these might impact on the Muslim world. A greater level of depth and/or breadth would have allowed these candidates to achieve higher marks.

AO2: Generally, candidates seemed more able to argue for secularisation being a threat to the Muslim world than it not. The most common argument being that secular countries may allow for behaviour that is considered unacceptable (haram) in Islam. Some candidates would have gained more marks if they had been able to develop this argument further or added other arguments – to show a greater level of evaluation or critical analysis.

There were a few excellent responses demonstrating well-developed evaluation skills and offering a fully justified conclusion. A small number of candidates, for example, were able to show an appreciation of how secularisation can actually benefit the Muslim world by providing individual Muslims with a stronger test of faith. The result of this is a strengthened Muslim world. It is this level of analysis that is likely to be given the higher levels.

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