



General Certificate of Secondary Education

Religious Studies (4051/4052)
Full or Short Course
Specification A

Unit 8 Islam (405008)

Report on the Examination
2010 examination - June series

Further copies of this Report are available to download from the AQA Website: www.aqa.org.uk

Copyright © 2010 AQA and its licensors. All rights reserved.

COPYRIGHT

AQA retains the copyright on all its publications. However, registered centres for AQA are permitted to copy material from this booklet for their own internal use, with the following important exception: AQA cannot give permission to centres to photocopy any material that is acknowledged to a third party even for internal use within the centre.

Set and published by the Assessment and Qualifications Alliance.

The Assessment and Qualifications Alliance (AQA) is a company limited by guarantee registered in England and Wales (company number 3644723) and a registered charity (registered charity number 1073334). Registered address: AQA, Devas Street, Manchester M15 6EX

Unit 8 Islam

General Comments

The paper appeared to be accessible to candidates. Many centres had prepared their candidates well. There were a number of outstanding scripts showing high levels of understanding and evaluative skills. However, although candidates in the middle of the mark range displayed good knowledge, they often failed to show the depth of understanding which would have enabled them to gain the top levels in questions requiring explanation. Too frequently, there was a reliance on generalisations and trite remarks which did not answer the specific question or address the issues raised. Marks were sometimes lost through carelessness in the reading of questions and a misunderstanding of their demands.

Question A1 *The Mosque*

The majority of responses to part (a) showed accurate knowledge and understanding of the features of the mosque. However, there were a significant number of candidates who confused mihrab, minaret and minbar.

In part (b) most candidates showed good understanding of the role of the Madrassah as a school for learning the general principles and practices of Islam.

There was a wide range of accurate answers to part (c) indicative of the variety of activities that take place at a mosque.

Question A2 *Sources of Authority*

In part (a)(i) the vast majority of candidates knew that the Qur'an was written in Arabic.

Although most answers to part (a)(ii) showed understanding of the Qur'an as the complete and final guidance for all Muslims, very few candidates were able to state that the reason for Allah giving this guidance was in fact to correct all previous errors.

There was a wide range of responses to the issue in part (b) with the majority of candidates showing good understanding of the roles of both Muhammad and Shari'ah Law within Islam. Although Muhammad was perceived as the perfect role model, many candidates put forward a strong case for Shari'ah Law being more relevant in today's world.

In part (c) the majority of candidates were able to write at great length about the importance and relevance of the Qur'an as a guide to Muslims over many centuries, regardless of place or time. Although there was good debate as to the place of the Qur'an in a more scientific and technological age, many answers skilfully reflected the importance of basic moral guidance in its teachings.

Question A3 *The Hajj*

There were many high quality responses throughout this question. Most candidates showed good understanding of the importance of Makkah to Muslims in part (a) and were also able to describe correctly in part (b) the practices carried out at the specific places during hajj. Although it was not necessary, many answers gave accurate background information for the actions that pilgrims perform at Mina and Arafat. In part (c) candidates demonstrated sound evaluation of the importance of hajj to Muslims, stressing not only the idea of equality through Ihram but also the concepts of holiness, purity and separation from normal life. Although most candidates stressed the uniqueness of hajj, they were also aware of the issues of travelling long distances, personal health and finance. They were able to argue that life within the family and community was just as important as the hajj within Islam.

Question A4 *Personal Lifestyle*

Most answers to part (a) referred to modesty of dress, but the majority of examples were with regard to women rather than men. Where men were mentioned, the following points were creditworthy: no ostentatious dress, no gold or silk garments, no wearing of women's clothes and the covering of at least navel to knee at prayer times.

In answer to part (b), candidates generally understood the basic concept of Ummah in Islam as community, brotherhood and support for fellow Muslims.

Candidates demonstrated accurate knowledge of Muslim teaching about diet and dress in part (c). Most answers reflected good understanding of halal, not only with regard to food, but also in its wider application of all things that are permissible for Muslims. The more discerning candidates argued that practices show religion in action, as a demonstration of commitment to faith or as an example to others.

Question B5 *Family Life*

Descriptions of Muslim weddings in part (a)(i) were both diverse and wordy. Key areas which were worthy of credit included the fact that the marriage may be arranged, the simple ceremony, the fact that the bride need not be present, the contract, the dowry, the witnesses and the walimah.

Most candidates struggled to come to terms with part (a) (ii), failing to address the word 'religious' and answering in more general terms about the importance of marriage in Islam. Those responses which achieved the higher levels placed emphasis on marriage as a social contract, cultural rather than religious, with the joining of families as central to the process, or made a good case for the religious importance which might be implied through the ceremony.

The Muslim attitude to divorce is summed up in the teaching of Muhammad, who described it as the most detestable act allowed by Allah. In part (b) most candidates were able to emphasise the important role of families and the support provided for women and children where divorce was unavoidable.

There were many vague and generalised comments about the way in which Muslims worship at home in part (c). Central points to this answer included reading of the Qur'an, Ibadah service of Allah at all times, always doing one's best, practice of the pillars, observance of festivals and rites of passage.

In part (d) candidates argued for the important role of the family in Islam today in the face of pressure from secular life and the media. Responses credited at the higher levels also emphasised the importance of religious leaders, the role of the mosque, the Ummah and the Qur'an.

Question B6 *Justice and Equality*

Although most answers to part (a) reflected a basic knowledge of zakah as the idea of helping those in need, too many candidates were unable to develop their answers to explain how this happens. In Islam, zakah is the purification of wealth, to avoid greed and to promote equality and justice. It is a basic principle of Muslim economy, good deeds for the sake of Allah and social welfare.

In part (b) candidates made good attempts to explain Muslim teaching about prejudice. Most answers were based around the idea that all people are equal in the sight of Allah and so all humans should treat each other with respect and tolerance. Differences between people (language and colour) were Allah's intention, but this should not lead to prejudice. All are accountable on the Day of Judgement.

The majority of answers to the part (c) question were focussed on discrimination in general. Only the better responses focussed on 'religious beliefs', and even these sometimes struggled to achieve the higher levels. Candidates could have discussed the views that religious beliefs have been a cause of unrest throughout history, which in turn might lead to discrimination. Many debated the idea that all religions promote love to all humanity and that it is only fanatics who distort religious teaching.

Most answers to part (d)(i) were centred on the role of married women in Islam. Although many candidates showed an ethnocentric view of Muslim marriage and women's rights within Islam, there were many responses that emphasised the positive aspects of the important status of being a wife and mother and the dignity and security that marriage gives. Centres are advised that teaching about the role and status of women should encourage both reflection on Islamic teaching and understanding of some cultural practices.

Answers to part (d)(ii) presented a balanced view of the status of men and women in Islam. Creditworthy points to support the statement included men as the head of the family, men as providers, greater opportunities for men in society, Western views of Muslim women, cultural practice, divorce easier for men, polygamy allowed. On the other hand Islam teaches that women are equal but with different roles and responsibilities. Women are allowed to work and have the right to protection and privacy. They have an important role as mother and wife, manager of the household, and carer and teacher to children; some candidates noted that Muhammad gave positive praise for women.