



**General Certificate of Secondary Education  
June 2011**

**Religious Studies A (4050)**

**Unit 9: Islam: Ethics**

**405009**

***Report on the Examination***

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## **Unit 9: Islam: Ethics**

### **General Comments**

There were some excellent responses to this paper, which obviously reflected thorough preparation by both teachers and candidates. Most candidates appeared to manage their time well, but some answers were quite difficult to read and candidates should remember that they need to make sure all their work is legible. As will be seen in the comments on individual questions, there were a few weaknesses in the way some candidate approached particular styles of questions. For example, when answering 6-mark AO2 questions, some did not refer to Islam in their answers while others only presented one point of view, and when answering 4-mark AO1 questions some candidates simply made four separate statements instead of developing at least one of them. Having said that, the great majority of candidates clearly understood what was expected of them by each question asked.

### **Part A**

#### **Question A1 Crime and Punishment**

Many candidates scored full marks for part (a). Occasionally, candidates offered answers of the form, 'Deterrence – this aims to deter criminals, for example capital punishment'. There are two problems with such answers: firstly, 'to deter' shows no understanding of deterrence, and secondly, the example adds nothing to the answer. In order to score full marks the candidate should instead have written something like, 'deterrence – the aim is to put other people off committing crime by showing them that they would have capital punishment if they did it.'

Many candidates scored full marks in part (b), but some wrote far more than was necessary and so may have penalised themselves by leaving less time for later questions which carry more marks.

There were some very good answers to part (c). Many candidates referred to the example of the Prophet and summarised hadith as well as outlining the general teaching of Islam. Some also gave examples of 'unforgivable' crimes to show why, in their view, justice sometimes demanded punishment rather than forgiveness.

#### **Question A2 The Environment**

Part (a) was a straightforward question for most candidates, but a few confused causes and effects, and others gave the same cause of pollution twice in slightly different words. Others again wrote far more than was necessary for the marks available.

Many scored full marks for part (b). Of those who did not, many simply failed to develop any of the points they made.

There were some very well-informed answers to part (c), but some candidates failed to debate the issue and simply explained that animals do have rights in Islam. Many of the best answers used non-Islamic arguments in support of the view and arguments from Islam against it. This is a legitimate, and often a very successful, tactic.

### **Question A3 Relationships and Lifestyle**

Part (a) was another question for which many scored full marks, but some wrote more about marriage than family and, once again, some failed to develop any of the points they made, so limiting the marks that could be awarded.

The best answers to part (b) showed a clear understanding of what being a good Muslim meant (for example, following God's law, carrying out the pillars). Many also argued that being a homosexual is not a problem while being a practising homosexual is, and supported their argument with reference to the Qur'an. A few stated their opinion but did not explain it, which meant they could not gain any marks.

Part (c) was a very accessible question, and there were many excellent answers. Most candidates argued, very clearly, that drugs such as alcohol are forbidden while prescription drugs are allowed and used both Qur'an and hadith in support of their answer. Others successfully argued that even some prescription drugs are not allowed, either because of their origins in unethical animal testing or because suffering is part of God's plan.

### **Question 4 Wealth and Poverty**

The answers to part (a) were generally very well informed, and many candidates gave very good examples of the work done by Muslim Aid and used those examples to develop the points that they made. This allowed many candidates to score full marks.

Most candidates answered part (b) very well, but some confused zakah and sadaqah. Many of the best answers explained how service, rather than money, could be offered as sadaqah and made it clear that sadaqah was voluntary.

There were some very thoughtful answers to part (c), and most candidates were able to support their answers with clear evidence from the Qur'an or hadith. Many argued that it was acceptable to spend money on necessities but not on luxuries, others that once the money had been purified by paying zakah and carrying out all your duties, you could spend it on yourself in any halal way.

## **Part B**

### **Question 5 Conflict and Suffering**

This question was by far the less popular of the two in Part B, but there were some very good answers to each part. Some answers appeared to be rather rushed, and some of the handwriting was difficult to read.

There were many well-informed answers to part (a), with good reference to the teaching of Islam and good development.

There were some interesting answers to part (b). Candidates often focused on what the protest might be about and argued that only in extreme circumstances, once all else had failed, might some limited form of violence be justified. Others argued that it could only be used as a last resort in self defence. Another approach recognised that some Muslims try to justify the use of force but rejected those arguments as un-Islamic.

There were some good answers to part (c), but some candidates seemed to run out of things to say, and a few appeared not to recognise the term 'reconciliation' and wrote, for example, about pre-destination instead. The best answers explained what reconciliation was, why it was encouraged and when it might not be the best idea.

In part (d) some candidates simply explained their view that nuclear war is never right, without considering the other side of the argument. The best answers generally offered Islamic arguments in support of the view and non-Islamic arguments against. Some candidates offered arguments for and against war in general. These had some value but were not specific enough.

### **Question 6 Life and Death**

This was a very popular question, and parts of it were answered very well by many of the candidates.

There were some very well-informed answers to part (a). Most candidates knew that Muslim attitudes to abortion vary, not least because of different views about when life actually begins. They were able to explain why some Muslims disapprove of abortion in all circumstances and why others see it as acceptable if, for example, the mother's life is at risk. Some candidates wrote far more than necessary and appeared to be rushing their answers. This sometimes meant that the answer was not coherent enough to merit full marks.

In part (b) most candidates appeared to understand the issues surrounding fertility treatment, and in particular the important differences between AIH and AID. There were some good discussions of whether Muslims should see fertility treatment as an example of 'playing God' and therefore forbidden, or as an example of using God-given intelligence to fulfil their duty to have children. Some candidates wrote at length about each of AID, AIH and surrogacy, but since this was a general question about fertility treatment there was no need for them to do so. A few candidates misunderstood the question and wrote about contraception instead.

In general, candidates were less confident in their approach to part (c) than to the other parts of B6, and some simply did not attempt it. Many, however, were clearly aware of both positive and negative attitudes towards genetic engineering among Muslims, often referring to somatic cell therapy in positive terms and 'designer babies' in very negative terms. Many made some points that they had also made in their discussion of fertility treatment, which was perfectly acceptable where relevant.

There were more one-sided arguments which amounted to no more than an explanation of why euthanasia is not acceptable to some Muslims in part (d). This limited the marks that could be awarded. The best answers also considered, for example, turning off life-support machines or withdrawing other life saving treatment from those not responding to it as types of euthanasia which some Muslims could support.

### **Mark Ranges and Award of Grades**

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