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Examiner's Report Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2018

Pearson Edexcel GCSE
In Religious Studies B (3RB0)
Paper 2CX Islam

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Introduction

GCSE (9-1) Religious Studies
Religious Studies B
Paper 1: Area of Study 2 – Religion, Peace and Conflict
Option 2CX – Islam

This paper contributes 50% of the overall short course award. The paper includes two questions, each covers a section of the specification, and all candidates are expected to answer all four sub-questions from each section. Details of the assessment content are provided in the specification. Centres are expected to use the Edexcel specification, rather than other published resources, when planning and teaching the course content. The examination is written based on the specification content.

This paper, like its associated full course paper, encourage an in depth study of Islam today. 3RBO 2C focuses on Islamic beliefs and Crime and Punishment.

3RBO_2CX_Q1a

The question asked was:
'Outline **three** characteristics of Allah.'

This question was based on Specification Point 1.3.

Outline is a new command word for students this year and requires them to give three brief sentences in response to the question. This was a straightforward introduction to the examination and many candidates were able to suggest three characteristics of Allah with many using omnipotence, omniscience and omnibenevolence.

As it was a straightforward question some candidates were unable to resist the temptation to simply provide a list. In this case candidates were only able to achieve one mark if all three characteristics were correctly identified.

For example, a candidate who stated:
Allah is just (1)
Allah is omnipotent (1)
Allah is omniscient (1), scored three marks.

However, if the candidate suggested:
Just
Omnipotent
Omniscient, only one mark was awarded.

If the candidate failed to list three correct responses no marks were awarded for an incorrect list.

Examiner Tip:
Make sure an outline is not simply a list.

3RB0_2CX_Q1b

The question asked was:

'Explain **two** ways that belief in predestination affects the life of a Muslim.'

This question was based on Specification Point 1:7.

This is a familiar command word for candidates and the mark scheme follows a familiar marking pattern. In order to achieve full marks in this question candidates are required to give two developed ways. Only two ways can be credited and the development must relate both to the way already provided and the question stem.

Some candidates struggled to respond to this question, with a number choosing to leave it out completely. Others directly equated pre-destination with Judgement Day and suggested that a belief in pre-destination would make Muslims do good in order to influence impending judgement or improve one's standing before Allah. However, the nature of al-quadr suggests that this responsibility has largely been removed from Muslims since the result is already known. More able candidates considered the concept of good behaviour in response to divine predestination as a means of fulfilling Allah's judgement and often linked this to attitudes towards the impact of pre-destination on the issue of freewill. Other candidates confined their responses to a factual account of Muslim beliefs with respect to pre-destination, but did not consider how these beliefs would potentially influence behaviour.

Examiner tip:

Do not equate predestination with Judgement Day or the test of life.

3RB0_2CX_Q1c

The question asked was:

'Explain **two** reasons why angels are important in Islam.

In your answer you must refer to a source of wisdom and authority.'

This question was based on Specification Point 1:6.

This is a new question structure for the new specification and many candidates found this difficult to apply in their responses. In order for a candidate to achieve the additional mark for a source of wisdom and authority the source must be linked to a developed reason. The source must be correctly attributed such that if a candidate quotes the Hadith, but claims it is from the Qur'an, the mark cannot be awarded since the source is incorrect. As a result, many attempted uses of a source of wisdom and authority were credited as a development of a simple reason, rather than an additional point used to further justify a developed reason.

A number of candidates also 'invented' quotations, in some cases rewriting what they considered to be their best argument with the addition of speech marks. Some also quoted a single word as their source of authority, in this question it was often 'Read' which did not justify the award of the additional mark. However, many candidates had clear views on the importance of angels in Islam with many citing the delivery of the Qur'an to Muhammad, the role of the angel of death or the noble recorders. A number of candidates also considered the importance with respect to the Articles of Belief. As a result, many candidates were awarded four marks, though five marks remained a rarity.

Examiner Tip:

Always use your source of authority reference linked to a developed reason.

3RBO_2CX_Q1d

The question asked:

"Prophet Muhammad is the only role model a Muslim needs."

Evaluate this statement considering arguments for and against.

In your response you should:

- refer to Muslim teachings
- reach a justified conclusion.'

This question was based on Specification Point 1:4.

This was also a new question structure for the new examination series. The new style d questions are the area of the paper where Assessment Objective 2 is assessed. Candidates are expected to interpret the stimulus to consider different viewpoints and perspectives on the topic by deconstructing the issue and constructing logical chains of reasoning. The definition of the command word also makes it clear that arguments must be justified by the appraisal of evidence leading to a justified conclusion.

Many candidates struggled to achieve more than level 2 in d responses due to the absence of the required evaluation of the relative merits of the two sides of the question and little justification for a conclusion. Where one was provided it was often in the form of 'I think...'. Some candidates demonstrated detailed knowledge and understanding of relevant information from the Qur'an (for example) but were still limited by the lack of appraisal and evaluation. In this example, there were simple arguments for and against, some proposed other prophetic role models and then gave a conclusion in favour of Muhammad with no more justification than his importance in Islam. Some cited modern living role models, most frequently parents or imams, but few used it as an opportunity to highlight the value of this line of reasoning given that such examples are both relevant to modern life and immediate.

A maximum of three marks was also awarded in this question for quality of spelling, punctuation and grammar. In general, the quality of English used was very good and most candidates achieved three marks.

Examiner tip:

Focus on appraisal and evaluation to reach the higher levels.

3RBO_2CX_Q2a

The question asked was:

'Outline **three** Muslim attitudes to the importance of peace.'

The question is based on Specification Point 4:1.

Many candidates responded to this question by offering three reasons why peace is important to Muslims. This information was not linked to an attitude resulting from this information; as a result, many candidates did not achieve many marks in this question. The most common reason offered was that Islam means peace. This is debatable at best, since many consider the root of the word to mean surrender or submission.

Some candidates attempted to link their reasons to a resultant attitude, for example, 'Muhammad was a peaceful man and Muslims live a peaceful life to follow his example'. Since the reason clearly linked to an attitude answered the question such responses were credited.

Examiner Tip:

Make sure you follow the instruction in the question: an attitude is not the same as a reason.

3RBO_2CX_Q2b

The question asked was:

'Explain **two** Muslim teachings about Holy War.'

This question was based on Specification Point 4:6.

There was a general confusion between the Islamic definitions of Just War and Holy War. Whilst there is significant overlap between the two, many candidates diverged into a clear discussion of Just War when the question required consideration of Holy War. Candidates who did well often focussed on those factors which are specific to military Jihad though credit was given to those candidates who referred to areas where there is significant overlap between military Jihad and Just War theory, such as the idea that civilians should not be harmed.

Examiner Tip: Make a clear distinction between Holy War and Just War.

3RBO_2CX_Q2c

The question asked was:

'Explain **two** reasons why many Muslims are against the use of weapons of mass destruction.

In your answer you must refer to a source of wisdom and authority.'

This question is based on Specification Point 4: 7.

Whilst many candidates were able to suggest two reasons why this statement is true there was significant difficulty in effectively linking these to a source of wisdom and authority. The most obvious answers were, of course, the most popular, with students focussing on the death of innocent civilians, the destruction of the environment and the destruction of places of worship all of which contradict the Qur'an in terms of the waging of military Jihad. The challenge in finding a relevant source of authority was greater as the candidates were expected to take a modern issue and find a relevant Qur'anic quote. The most common successful use of a source of wisdom and authority offered 'whoever kills a soul unless for a soul or for corruption [done] in the land – it is as if he had slain mankind entirely. And whoever saves one – it is as if he had saved mankind entirely'. (Surah 5:32.)

Examiner Tip: Practice using quotes in new situations.

3RBO_2BX_Q2d

The question asked was:

"A war today cannot be a Just War.'

Evaluate this statement considering arguments for and against.

In your response you should:

- refer to Muslim teachings
- refer to different Muslim points of view
- reach a justified conclusion.'

This question is based on Specification Point 4: 5.

There was significant reliance on the Thomist arguments of Thomas Aquinas with little attempt to re-apply them within an Islamic context. In addition, a significant number of candidates focussed almost entirely on the incompatibility of Weapons of Mass Destruction with a Just War which significantly limited the value of their arguments.

The question, although from the option section of the paper, did not require non-religious views so although a significant proportion of candidates employed such arguments they could not be credited. A small minority of candidates constructed an entirely secular response which could not be credited.

However the limiting factor was, for most, the lack of appraisal and evaluation inherent in the responses.

Summary

It was very encouraging to see the quality of knowledge and understanding of Islam displayed by many candidates and this bodes well for the future. Centres would be well advised to revisit pre-destination as more than an adjunct to Judgement, and to focus on the critique of candidate arguments in d questions (especially encouraging a more considered approach the 'this is a strong argument').