



Pearson
Edexcel

Examiners' Report

Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2019

Pearson Edexcel GCSE

In Religious Studies Short Course (3RB0)

Paper 1: Area of Study 1 – Religion and Ethics

Option 1C – Islam

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Introduction

Paper 1: Area of Study 1 – Religion and Ethics, Islam

This paper contributes 50% of the overall short course award at GCSE. The paper consists of two compulsory 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 encourages an in depth study of Islam today. 3RBO 1C consists of one generic sections, Muslim Beliefs, with one option topic, Marriage and the Family. This is the second year of examining for this Pearson/Edexcel qualification and teaching should be firmly rooted in the demands of the specification.

By comparison to last year there was much to commend in the work of many candidates.

In a) questions very few candidates attempted to give a list, so fewer candidates lost marks on straightforward questions.

c) Responses, particularly the use of a source of authority, demonstrated significant improvement. Many more candidates gave recognisable quotes or paraphrases of the Qur'an/Hadith rather than a generic 'the Qur'an says...'.

In d) questions the standard remained much the same as last year with few candidates able to appraise their own arguments. Some who did attempt appraisal did so at the expense of the development of their arguments. The levels for d marking are firmly rooted in the demands of the higher order thinking skills so it was pleasing to see that more able candidates were better prepared to take on the challenge, taking the discussion to the next level.

3RBO_1C_Q1a

Question 1a:

'Outline three beliefs about holy books in Islam.'

This is from specification bullet point 1.5.

Many candidates had clear ideas about Muslim beliefs on this topic though some confined their responses to beliefs about the Qur'an rather than holy books in their entirety. This question is based on bullet point 1.5 in the specification, where it outlines the holy books candidates should consider. Those accepted by the Specification are the Qur'an, the Tawrat (Torah), the Zabur (Psalms), the Injil (Gospel) and the Sahifah

(Scrolls). Candidates who included writings other than these in their responses therefore lost marks.

In general, it was pleasing to see that following the work of Centres based on last year's feedback there were very few lists in evidence, candidates instead responded in full sentences or brief statements. This enabled them to access all the marks their knowledge allowed.

The most common responses included ideas such as: They are the Word of Allah, they were given to the Prophets and they contain guidance on how to live.

3RB0_1C_Q1b

Question 1b:

'Explain two reasons why it is important that Allah is a god of justice.'

The question is derived from specification bullet point 1.3, concerning the nature of Allah.

Candidates who focused on the justice system rather than divine justice often struggled to link the two. There were also a significant number of candidates who equated justice with mercy. The two are very different concepts. If an offender is judged fairly they receive the punishment their actions warrant. If an offender is judged mercifully the punishment may be amended and therefore not be just. When Allah dispenses mercy, he is not being just but rather setting justice aside in favour of mercy.

3RB0_1C_Q1c

Question 1c:

'Explain two reasons why the Six Beliefs of Islam are important to Muslims.
In your answer you must refer to a source of wisdom and authority.'

This question is based on specification bullet point 1.1.

In general candidates this year had a better understanding of the Six Beliefs and the differences between the Six Beliefs, the Five Pillars, the Five Roots of Usul Al-Din and the ten Obligatory Acts though some continue to confuse beliefs with actions. The most successful approaches took one of two forms, either the candidates considered the Six Beliefs as a body and discussed issues such as their ability to unify Muslims as they all believe the same key concepts, or they looked at one or two key Beliefs and explained why they are important. Both approaches were equally creditworthy. Those candidates who struggled tended to do so because they had no clear understanding of the key beliefs contained in the Six Beliefs. The most common area of confusion was with the

Five Pillars, with a significant minority of candidates asserting the importance of paying Zakah or performing Salah.

The most commonly used source of authority was 'Affirm your belief in Allah, his angels....', a paraphrase of part of Surah 4:136.

3RB0_1C_Q1d

Question 1d:

'If the future is already decided there is no point in trying to be a good Muslim.'

Candidates were required to evaluate the statement considering Muslim teachings in order to reach a justified conclusion.

This question was based on specification bullet point 1.7, the nature and importance of pre-destination for Muslims.

Most candidates were awarded the maximum mark of 3 for SPaG. An isolated error in spelling or grammar did not reduce the overall SPaG awarded.

It was encouraging this year to see that many more candidates were beginning to make simple judgements of the quality of the evidence discussed (AO2). This led to many more candidates having the potential to access Level 3 and Level 4 marks. Sometimes, sadly, it came at the expense of the need to consider the range of elements relevant to the question.

Sadly, it remains true that a significant minority of candidates continue to include non-religious views in 'd' responses. Candidates should be aware that these will only be credited if they are specifically requested in the question rubric. It is also true that very few of the conclusions provided by candidates are a conclusion based firmly in an evaluation, rather they are either a personal opinion or a summary of the arguments proposed with little by way of appraisal or evaluation.

3RB0_1C_Q2a

It is unusual to be asked to give reasons in an a) question. However, an alternative form of asking this question would have made the wording unnecessarily complicated.

Question 2a:

'Outline three reasons why marriage is important to Muslims.'

This refers to specification bullet point 2.1.

The most commonly used responses included ideas such as; it is the only lawful place to have sex, procreate and raise children, and ideas linked to the fulfilment of emotional, physical and spiritual needs. The benefits of marriage in building a strong united Muslim community were also considered. Whilst it is clearly possible to have children

without being married this is unusual in Muslim communities so it was accepted as a valid reason for marriage.

3RB0_1C_Q2b

Question 2b:

'Explain two reasons why sexual relationships are important.'

This question is derived from specification bullet point 2.2.

Candidates, perhaps understandably, were less comfortable with this question with most candidates linking sexual relationships to having a family. Many also pointed to the idea that sex is a gift from Allah and it's bonding effect, making divorce less likely.

3RB0_1C_Q2c

Question 2c:

'Explain two reasons why Muslims have different views about the use of contraception. In your answer you must refer to a source of wisdom and authority.'

Many candidates were able to suggest two valid perspectives on the use of contraceptives, often supported by a relevant quotation, usually from the Hadith. The most commonly seen were that Allah will not burden you with more than you can bare, and the interchange when Muhammad advised Muslims that it was better not to use coitus interruptus. The most commonly seen error was in those instances when candidates claimed Muhammad used contraceptives himself, rather than that he simply acknowledged that it was used. Whilst he did not condemn the practise of coitus interruptus he did not entirely condone it.

A minority of candidates simply utilised their arguments about abortion, without modification, and often these were irrelevant. In these cases, they used the quote 'Do not kill your children for fear of poverty' but often struggled to make it appropriate since many forms of contraceptive, such as barrier methods, prevent fertilisation rather than killing fertilised eggs.

3RB0_1C_Q2d

Question 2d:

'Women should be treated the same way as men in a Muslim family.'

This should be evaluated with reference to Muslim teachings to reach a justified conclusion.

This is based on specification bullet point 2.7.

Many of the answers strayed beyond the scope of the home, often the arguments employed could still have added value had they been applied back to the question stem. There was evidence of both historic and contemporary Islamic perspectives and some very constructive use of relevant sources of authority both from the Qur'an and Hadith. Some candidates who did attempt to appraise their arguments did so at the expense of the content and others relied on the strong/weak argument, not always successfully. To fail to supply an ayah from the Qur'an to support an argument, for example, and identify that as a weakness, may speak more to the depth of the candidate's knowledge of the Qur'an than to an inherent weakness in the argument. There was a pleasing increase in the range of candidate's who were prepared to consider alternative perspectives from the breadth of Islamic thought, even if they ultimately found them unconvincing.

Summary

Based on their performance on this paper, candidates should:

- In a) questions not give too much information. There is no requirement for developed responses.
- In c) questions avoid using 'The Qur'an supports this in Surah 4', for example. It is advisable to tell the examiner what the Qur'an says on the issue.
- In d) questions pay attention to the purpose of the conclusion, a question requirement. The conclusion of an evaluation should not be a statement of a personal opinion but should be firmly rooted in the evaluation.
- In d) questions consider the range of possible elements. It is difficult to access higher level marks based on one basic idea.
- Read carefully and take care that they understand what the question is asking for, reasons are different from beliefs or ways.
- Be discouraged from continuing their answers on the blank pages at the end of the script, they should ask for extra paper.

