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Edexcel

Examiners' Report

Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2019

Pearson Edexcel GCSE

In Religious Studies Short Course (3RB0)

Paper 2: Area of Study 2 – Religion, Peace and  
Conflict

Option 2C - Islam

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## Introduction

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 2C consists of one generic section, Muslim Beliefs, with one option topics, Crime and Punishment. This is the second year of awarding 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.
- b) questions continued to be well executed by candidates who grasp the concept of a developed reason.
- c) responses, particularly in the use of a source of authority, demonstrated significant improvement. Many more candidates gave recognisable quotes or paraphrases from 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\_2C\_Q01a

Question 1a:

'Outline three teachings about Imamah in Shi'a Islam.'

This is based on specification bullet point 1.2.

Given that this belief could be seen as the source of the Shi'a/Sunni divide, a surprising number of candidates had little idea of what Shi'as believe about the concept. Some used the simple idea that Ali was Muhammad's chosen successor and could go no further. Others contented themselves with writing three commonly used Muslim beliefs, presumably in the hope that one would be somehow relevant, whilst others opted for three ways that Shi'a Muslims differed from Sunni Muslims. Those who did know scored highly often using the idea of succession, the variation in belief between the Twelvers and the Seveners and the return of the Twelfth Imam to good effect.

### **3RB0\_2C\_Q01b**

Question 1b:

'Explain two events Muslims believe will happen on the Day of Judgement.'

This is taken from specification bullet point 1.8.

The key to this question is the idea of an event, rather than understanding the purpose of the Day of Judgement, candidates were required to explain what Muslims believe will happen on that day. For those who went beyond the Judgement there was much to choose from. Some candidates cleverly separated the Judgement from the act of going to paradise or hell, others considered the sounding of the horn, the resurrection, the gathering at Arafat or the crossing of the bridge.

Some candidates focussed on the questioning and possible punishment in the grave. This was not credited as this takes place on the death of a person in this life which may occur long before the Day of Judgement. Too frequently Bazarkh was cited as a Judgement Day alternative, or the place where judgement was made. Some confused the idea that the angels brought the books of your deeds with judgement and ascribed judgement to the angels rather than to Allah.

### **3RB0\_2C\_Q01c**

Question 1c:

'Explain two reasons why the oneness of Allah is important to Muslims. In your answer you must refer to a source of wisdom and authority.'

This is based on specification bullet point 1.3, the nature of Allah.

Responses to this question varied widely. Some candidates reinterpreted it to read why it is important to be one with Allah, or as a general question about the nature of Allah. Others were able to clearly explain the significance of the oneness of Allah, often in terms of Islam as a monotheistic faith, well supported by relevant use of a source of wisdom and authority. Many used it as a vehicle to talk about Allah's power or his loving kindness often without the necessary link to oneness.

Perhaps the most useful quotation is Surah 7:158 which declares the oneness of Allah and links to the Shahadah. The Shahadah was widely referenced and quoted and this was accepted as a paraphrase of this reference. Some candidates also used Surah 16:36 to good effect.

### **3RB0\_2C\_Q01d**

Question 1d:

'If everyone followed the Six Beliefs of Islam the world would be a better place.'

Candidates were expected to evaluate the statement with reference to Muslim teaching in order to reach a justified conclusion.

This is based on specification bullet point 1.1.

Some candidates were sidetracked into sharing their knowledge about the content of the Six Beliefs, with specific detail, whilst failing to consider whether it would make the world a better place. Others considered the question in a more general sense suggesting the possible benefits and potential pitfalls of a single common belief system. Some gave consideration to the possible ramifications (Shi'as/Christians renouncing their own beliefs) as well as to whether violence was linked to interpretation not belief. A number pointed out the differences between the Sunni Six Beliefs and the Shi'a Roots of Usul al-Din and reflected on the current disagreements between Sunni and Shi'a Islam.

There remains significant confusion, for some candidates, between the Six Beliefs and the Five Pillars, with Zakah commonly referenced, in spite of the fact that it is an action rather than a belief.

### **3RB0\_2C\_Q02a**

Question 2a:

'Outline three Muslim beliefs towards the use of punishment for protection.'

The question links to specification bullet point 2.5, the aims of punishment.

Some candidates failed to read the question carefully, and therefore, rather than a focus on punishment as a means of protection, offered generic Muslim beliefs about punishment, often with a focus on the importance of justice, Just War or violence.

### **3RB0\_2C\_Q02b**

Question 2b:

'Outline two reasons why justice is important for Muslims.'

This is from specification bullet point 2.1.

Some candidates approached this from the perspective of divine justice and the significance of the final judgement, others focussed their attention on the justice system, either was acceptable.

Some candidates confused justice with forgiveness/mercy, or the Golden rule or punishment in a general sense. Justice is dispensed on the basis of merit. Good deeds earn reward, sins result in punishment. Anything which interrupts this process, be it clemency, forgiveness, mercy or grace, are only operating because justice has been set aside. The concepts are mutually exclusive, a just punishment will ensure a person gets what they deserve, if Allah is merciful they may not.

### **3RB0\_2C\_Q02c**

Question 2c:

'Explain two reasons why some Muslims support the use of capital punishment. In your answer you must refer to a source of wisdom and authority.'

This is taken from specification bullet point 2.8., although this question is specific to Muslim attitudes.

Whilst the majority of candidates understood the concept of Capital Punishment there were a significant minority who equated Capital Punishment with corporal punishment, citing examples such as Muhammad threatening to cut off the hand of his daughter if she were found to be a thief. Whilst this is an example of an hadud punishment from Shari'ah Law, it is not a form of Capital Punishment. Most candidates used 'An eye for an eye' as the source of authority, though others successfully used 'If anyone kills a man, except for retribution and the law, it will be as if he has killed the whole of mankind'.

### **3RB0\_2C\_Q02d**

Question 2d:

'Suffering makes people better Muslims.'

The question requires candidates to evaluate the statement using Muslim teachings to reach a justified conclusion.

Candidates generally, and perhaps predictably, tended to contrast the view that patience in the face of suffering encouraged one to turn to Allah, grow closer to him and thereby become a better Muslim, with the idea that suffering could challenge the strength of a person's faith. This was often linked to the concept of life as a test with the eternal reward at the end for those who persist in faith. Some, but not many, candidates referenced Ayyub (Job) as an example. It did generate a wide range of responses with Level 1 amply represented, however there were also some very strong responses showing the candidates concerned had considered the question in order to reach a valid conclusion.

### **Summary**

Based on their performance on this paper, candidates are offered the following advice:

- In a) questions many candidates gave too much information. There is no requirement for developed responses.
- In c) questions candidates should 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 some attention should be paid 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 the range of possible elements should also be considered. It is difficult to access higher level marks by consideration of one basic idea.
- Throughout the paper candidates need to read carefully and take care that they understand what the question is asking for, reasons are different from beliefs or ways.
- Please discourage candidates from continuing their answers on the blank pages at the end of the script, ask for extra paper.