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Examiners' Report
Principal Examiner Feedback

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Pearson Edexcel GCSE
In Religious Studies B (1RB0)
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 award at GCSE. The paper consists of four 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. 1RB0 2C consists of two generic sections, Muslim Beliefs and Living the Muslim Life, with two option topics, Crime and Punishment and Peace and Conflict. This was the third year of awarding for this Pearson/Edexcel qualification though it was far from a normal year for either teachers or candidates. Most students across the country were content with their teacher assessed grades awarded in the summer, following the cancellation of examinations in response to the Covid-19 pandemic, as a consequence, the entry in the Autumn series was vastly reduced across all papers. It is therefore significantly more difficult to draw general conclusions from limited evidence this provided.

By comparison to the previous two examination series the following observations can be made:

a)-type sub-questions: Candidates, in general, were confident in answering these questions. The majority of candidates suggested three valid points in response to the questions.

b)-type sub-questions: Questions continued to be well executed by candidates who grasped the concept of a developed reason.

c)-type sub-questions: There was some evidence that candidates were less confident in the use of a relevant source of authority than demonstrated last year. A number of candidates reverted to 'the Qur'an says...' and then provided a generic summary of teaching rather than using a specific and identifiable teaching.

d)-type sub-questions: 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 is perhaps not surprising that these appeared to suffer most from the reduction in teacher contact time caused by school closures.

In addition, there was more evidence of entire sub-questions missed out by the candidates. This, again, may be directly attributable to the complications caused by the closure of schools.

SECTION 1: Muslim Beliefs

1RB0_2C_Q01a

1a) Outline three ways the Six Beliefs of Islam are shown in Muslim communities today.

This is taken from Specification bullet point 1.1.

Candidates had a good grasp of the content of the Six Beliefs and many suggested valid ways in which the Six Beliefs are expressed by the community. Some cited examples such as acknowledging the angels after prayer or naming children after the prophets. Some candidates continue to misread or misunderstand the command word with the result that some gave three examples of the Six Beliefs, often failing to outline how they were seen in the community.

1RB0_2C_Q01b

1b) Explain two reasons why the Qur'an is important to Muslims.

This is taken from Specification bullet point 1.5.

In general, most candidates found this straightforward, offering reasons such as 'It is the word of Allah' or it 'Provides guidelines for living life as Allah intended'. Many were able to develop their reasons effectively using quotations from the Qur'an or relevant examples of its use. Some candidates gave examples of how the Qur'an was honoured in the community without linking this aspect to its importance.

1RB0_2C_Q01c

1c) Explain two ways belief in al-Qadr affects the lives of Muslims.
In your answer you must refer to a source of wisdom and authority.

This is taken from Specification bullet point 1.7.

As evidenced in 2019 some candidates found the concept of al-Qadr difficult. However many found this question on the topic more accessible and were able to suggest ideas such as 'It will make them try to live according to Allah's will' developed by 'in order to please Allah and receive the reward'. Many struggled to effectively provide a relevant source of wisdom and authority or, having suggested a quote, linking it to both the way and the development. This may be a reflection of the difficult circumstances faced by students this year in particular.

1RB0_2C_Q01d

1d) "Angels are important in a Muslim's daily life."

Evaluate this statement considering arguments for and against.

In your response you should:

- refer to Muslim teachings
- reach a justified conclusion

This is taken from Specification bullet point 1.6.

Responses to this question revealed one of the major issues persisting for candidates. A number of candidates answered this as though it asked 'Why are angels important?' They responded by writing down everything they knew about angels in Islam including physical descriptions and historic importance. Much of this was deemed irrelevant as it was not linked to daily life today. For example, it may indeed be of enormous importance that Jibril delivered the Qur'an to Muhammad but unless that is then linked to the impact this has on Muslim life today it is largely irrelevant. It is vital that candidates consider the question as a whole rather than looking for a keyword to respond to.

SECTION 2: Crime and Punishment

1RB0_2C_Q02a

2a) Outline three Muslim beliefs about the causes of crime.

This is taken from Specification bullet point 2.2.

Few candidates struggled with this, proposing a variety of valid factors which may lead to crime. Those who did struggle tended to focus on the punishment for the crime rather than the cause.

1RB0_2C_Q02b

2b) Explain two Muslim attitudes towards punishment.

This is taken from Specification bullet point 2.4.

Many candidates dealt with this successfully, often contrasting the Qur'anic concept of reciprocal punishment with the idea of blood money and forgiveness as the preferable means of achieving retribution. Many of the candidates used development effectively to achieve maximum marks. Some candidates also employed the idea of Allah as the ultimate one with the right to punish or reward, with hell as the final punishment.

1RB0_2C_Q02c

2c) Explain two reasons why Muslims believe justice is important.

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

This is taken from Specification bullet point 2.1.

Many candidates had a clear idea of the significance of justice in Islam. They often based this on the concept that Allah is just and used 'Allah commands justice' (Surah 16:90) as the source of authority. Many also considered the importance of justice being seen to be done to teach the community the consequences of their wrongdoing, leading to a more coherent and peaceful society.

On the other hand, a significant proportion struggled to separate justice from punishment, and gave answers based on the appropriateness of certain punishments and their personal considerations as to whether the punishment constituted justice. These candidates often struggled to develop reasons and the source of authority used concerned the importance of punishment rather than justice.

1RB0_2C_Q02d

2d) "No one should ever be subject to torture."

Evaluate this statement considering arguments for and against.

In your response you should:

- refer to Muslim teachings
- refer to relevant ethical arguments
- reach a justified conclusion

This is taken from Specification bullet point 2.7.

This proved surprisingly challenging for a number of students. The question was focused on the treatment of criminals and leaned itself to situations where torturing a criminal may prove to be for the greater good. Unfortunately a significant number of candidates approached it from the prism of punishment and considered whether specific forms of treatment could be regarded as torture, since this often involved judging the punishments defined by the Qur'an and describing them as torture, this approach was unlikely to gain significant credit.

Those who linked torture to criminals often considered its potential value in questioning terrorists, whose knowledge may be time-sensitive, such that the inhumane treatment of one person may save the lives of many. This was then contrasted with the unreliability of information obtained under torture and the impact on those who had to carry out the torture. Few candidates went beyond a personal opinion as a conclusion, with little evidence of any attempt to weigh the merits and flaws of the two sets of arguments.

SECTION 3: Living the Muslim Life

1RB0_2C_Q03a

3a) Outline three ways the Ten Obligatory Acts are important for Shi'a Muslims.

This is taken from Specification bullet point 3.1.

There remains a degree of confusion concerning the Ten Obligatory Acts and the Five Pillars, with some candidates suggesting Shahadah as one of the Ten Obligatory Acts. However most candidates used examples such as prayer and Zakat and explained their importance to Shi'a Muslims.

1RB0_2C_Q03b

3b) Explain two stages of the Hajj.

This is taken from Specification bullet point 3.6.

Most candidates demonstrated clear understanding of the activities undertaken during the Hajj and the spiritual significance they demonstrate. Many mentioned the spiritual state of Ihram, Tawaf and the journey between Safa and Marwan to commemorate Hagar's search for water.

1RB0_2C_Q03c

3c) Explain two reasons why Muslims believe Salah is important.
In your answer you must refer to a source of wisdom and authority.

This is taken from Specification bullet point 3.3.

Candidates continue to exhibit sound knowledge and understanding of the Five Pillars, Salah being no exception. They confidently explained the importance of Salah both in fulfilling Allah's command and in benefitting the life of those who pray. Many used the reference in Surah 15:98 'So glorify the praises of your Lord and be one of those who always pray' accurately and to good effect. It therefore was the c question were candidates often gained the additional mark for use of an appropriate source of authority. Unfortunately some candidates continue to use the quotation as a development and therefore do not gain the additional mark. The quotation must be applied to a developed reason, rather than a simple reason, to gain the mark.

1RB0_2C_Q03d

3d) "Reciting Shahadah is the most important thing a Muslim can do."
Evaluate this statement considering arguments for and against.

In your response you should:

- refer to Muslim teachings
- reach a justified conclusion

This is taken from Specification bullet point 3.2.

In many ways the word 'most' carries the greatest significance in this question. It is impossible to argue that the Shahadah is not an important thing for a Muslim so, to provide an alternative perspective, candidates were asked to consider whether is the most important thing for a Muslim today.

Many candidates were able to make sound, well-reasoned arguments for both sides of the question. On one side considering the Shahadah as the gateway to being a Muslim and its importance in reminding a Muslim of his duty to Allah, balanced against the importance of the other obligatory acts a Muslim must undertake, such as prayer and fasting. A number argued

that to be a Muslim a person must take on all the responsibilities of the faith so no one of the Five Pillars could be considered more important than the others.

The problem remained with the implementation of A02 with few candidates attempting to deconstruct the arguments given, to judge the quality of the evidence offered or to appraise the relative merits of the two arguments. As a consequence few candidates achieved Level 3 whilst many demonstrated detailed knowledge and understanding.

SECTION 4: Peace and Conflict

1RB0_2C_Q04a

4a) Outline three ways Muslims work for peace today.

This is taken from Specification bullet point 4.2.

Candidates struggled more than may have been expected with this question. There were many possible responses at international, national and local level which could have been employed but many candidates had no clear idea of practical ways in which Muslims work for peace. Some successfully linked the work of organisations such as Mosaic with young offenders to making the local community safer but many resorted to 'spreading the teaching of Islam' without demonstrating how this linked to peace. The generally lower performance in Section 4 questions may be a reflection of reduced teaching time in this strange year for education.

1RB0_2C_Q04b

4b) Explain two Muslim attitudes to pacifism.

This is taken from Specification bullet point 4.4.

Again this proved problematic for some. Some candidates had no clear idea of the concept of pacifism. Those who presented their case successfully tended to consider the idea that Muslims may be required to fight if Islam is under attack contrasted with the work of groups such as the Muslim Peace Fellowship. Many were able to present the case for Muslims being prepared to take up arms though they then struggled to find a different attitude.

1RB0_2C_Q04c

4c) Explain two teachings about Holy War.

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

This is taken from Specification bullet point 4.6.

This question was approached more confidently by many candidates though there was significant overlap with Just War theory in many responses. Such responses were credited since Surah 2:190 suggests that war should be fought in the way of Allah and that Muslims should not be the aggressor which means for many Muslims all wars should be Just Wars. Military Jihad also follows a strict set of rules laid down in the Qur'an which conform to many of the rules proposed for a Just War.

There was also significant use of credible Sources of Authority such as 'Fight in the way of Allah against those who fight against you' (Surah 2:190). Other aspects of the same ayah were also used to good effect.

1RB0_2C_Q04d

4d) "Religion is the main cause of conflict".

Evaluate this statement considering arguments for and against.

In your response you should:

- refer to Muslim teachings
- refer to non-religious points of view
- reach a justified conclusion

This is taken from Specification bullet point 4.3.

Many candidates expressed strong opinions on this subject, largely dependent on their personal view of organised religion. Many argued that religion may have been of significance in the past, using examples such as the Crusades, but that in today's world money and politics were the significant triggers. Some also pointed out that religion can be offered as a 'cause' for conflict but this is often just a label to define the warring parties and that the root of the difference may be something entirely less noble. The usual issues concerning a lack of analysis and evaluation persisted though in many ways this lent itself to such consideration. In general most candidates effectively used the views of non-religious people to provide an opposing argument to their own view.

Summary

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

- Read questions carefully, answer the question as an entirety rather than one aspect of it.
- When using Sources of Authority be as specific as possible, say what the Qur'an or Hadith actually says rather than a summary of the teaching. Avoid phrases such as 'The Qur'an says...' followed by a generic summary of the teaching concerned.
- Remember that the Sources of Authority must be linked directly to a developed reason.
- Focus on understanding what is required to access the higher levels of d questions. It is vital to analyse and judge the quality of the arguments offered. The conclusion of an evaluation should not be a statement of a personal opinion but should be firmly rooted in the evaluation of the evidence provided.

