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Examiners' Report
Principal Examiner Feedback

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Pearson Edexcel International GCSE
In Islamic Studies (4IS1) Paper 1

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This was the first post Covid GCSE 4IS1 Islamic Studies sat under exam conditions since summer 2019 series. The paper itself was divided into three sections with the first two sections offering a choice of question, while in the third section both questions must be answered. The first section is Section A – The life, teachings and achievements of the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh). The second section is Section B – The key beliefs, practices and features of the early Muslim community founded by the Prophet. The third section is Section C – Living the Muslim life today.

- In a) questions most candidates were able to provide two points that gained full marks demonstrating good knowledge of subject matter.
- In b) questions, candidates who gave a series of simple reasons in answer to the question were unable to get more than 1 mark as they did not show any development. Candidates who developed points often attained 3 marks showing good understanding and knowledge.
- In c) questions, candidates are asked to evaluate a question based on a good explanation. They are asked to show good development and demonstrate good knowledge and understanding. Candidates often moved beyond Level 1 when developing their answers and best candidates did this in a way that showed high evaluation skills attaining Level 3 in doing so.
- In d) questions candidates are asked to develop a balanced discussion of the topic raised by the question, and to show a comprehensive understanding of the implications raised. Centres are reminded that all d) questions have the following requirements:

In your answer you should include:

- reference to text provided
- another point of view
- your opinion/point of view using reasoned arguments
- a balanced conclusion.

Some candidates were able to provide a full and balanced discussion and were able to access marks at Level 3. However, most candidates either provided a simple discussion, without development, or a one-sided argument, or failed to refer to the text provided. This limited their ability to gain marks above Level 2, a maximum of eight out of the twelve marks available.

In Section A – The life, teachings, and achievements of the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh). Question 2 proved a more popular question over question 1 with almost twice as many students opting for this question.

Question 1

- a) Identify two important teachings of the Prophet's later years.

This was well answered with many candidates focusing on equality and the rights of women. Though some candidates referred only to the five pillars so dropped marks.

- b) Describe the support the 3rd Caliph Uthman gave to Muhammad (pbuh) during his lifetime.

This was well answered by candidates who knew who Uthman was and the support he gave. Some however mixed him up with Umar so dropped marks. Most marks were dropped by pupils not developing their answer to attain higher marks

- c) Explain the Prophet's relationship with other communities and countries

Many students answered this well focusing on the positive relationships Muhammad (pbuh) formed with different communities. This was followed by good development but candidates able to attain Level 2 or Level 3.

- (d) 'Without the battles fought by the Prophet, the establishment of Islam would have been impossible.'

This was answered well by students who understood question and related how the battles led to the establishment of Islam. Some only described battles which then did not allow for development and access to higher levels. Pupils who referred to the text enabled good development and gained access to Level 2 at least. Those that referred to two points of view and the text enabled their answers to be developed in such a way that they moved to Level 3. Only including one point of view or not including reference to the text meant pupils then could not go beyond Level 2.

Question 2

- (a) Identify two ways that the people of Madinah welcomed the Prophet

Well answered question with the majority of pupils gaining two marks

- (b) Describe events after the Prophet's death in Madinah.

Well answered by candidates who related the events to what happened immediately after the death of the Prophet. Candidates who did so were mostly able then to develop point to gain higher marks. Candidates dropped marks when referring to how Islam expanded in the times during the reign of the Khalifah's

- (c) Explain the significance and importance of the Hijrah for the early Muslim community.

Well answered by candidates who identified the significance of the Hijrah and related it to its importance for the early Muslim community in enabling freedom to practice their faith and safety. Candidates who only to Hajj dropped marks.

- (d) 'The Prophet's teachings on justice and equality were his most important teachings.'

Candidates answered this well in particular when relating key teachings of the Prophets Last Sermon and key elements of this. Candidates who related the text to their answer mostly attained level 2 and then those that included another point of view along with the text moved to Level 3. Candidates describing what justice and equality were dropped marks as did not relate to the question.

SECTION B – The key beliefs, practices and features of the early Muslim community founded by the Prophet. Question 4 proved a more popular question over question 3 with almost twice as many students opting for this question.

Question 3

- (a) Give two Islamic teachings about lying

Well answered with majority of candidates picking up both marks.

- (b) Describe the role of the angel Israfil.

Best answers were when development was shown through the blowing of the trumpet, everything dying and then the resurrection. Candidates who did not develop dropped marks. Some candidates explained the role of the angel Izrael and so dropped marks.

- (c) Explain the roles and achievements of the early Islamic leaders.

Candidates who answered this well did so by answering the question through the roles of the early Khalif's. This enabled good development to which saw many candidates able to attain Level 2 and Level 3 responses

- (d) 'The holy books were essential in the establishment of Islam.' Assess this statement.

The best answers were from candidates who referred to all the holy books of Islam. They were able to explain how these books tried but did not successfully bring the message to all of humankind. This was only achieved through the Qur'an. This line of response enabled good development and attained at least a Level 2. The best responses then included reference to the text and another point, with prophets being one of a number of alternate viewpoints which then saw candidates move into Level 3 marks

Question 4

- (a) Give two characteristics of Allah as shown in the Qur'an.

Well answered with most candidates getting 2 marks

- (b) Describe the Islamic belief about Barzakh.

This was well answered by candidates who identified Barzakh as life in the grave and then developed this with the questioning by the angels and visions of the afterlife. A lack of development is what showed

- (c) Explain, with examples, the difference between 'halal' and 'haram'

This was well answered by most candidates. They understood what halal and haram were and then were able to develop this by giving examples that saw them attain higher marks. Some candidates though did not give examples so limited themselves both in development and moving beyond Level 1.

- (d) 'Being creator is the most important attribute of Allah.' Assess this statement.

This was well answered with most candidates able to move into Level 2 by referring to Allah's power as creator and having no equal. Candidates who referred to the text were then able to develop achieve higher levels. Some used the oneness of Allah as referred to in the text as alternative point of view which then enabled them to gain Level 3 marks. Most referred to other traits such as merciful to give another view and, along with reference to text, move into Level 3 marks.

SECTION C – Living the Muslim life today

Question 5

- (a) Identify one feature of a Muslim funeral (Janazah).

Almost all candidates gained this mark

- (b) Describe how some Muslims commemorate the events of Ashura.

Many candidates dropped marks by trying to combine both Shia and Sunni understandings of Ashura. They marks were awarded from one perspective of this celebration. Candidates who answered from one tradition were often able to develop and attain higher marks. Some only gave simple points so only scored a mark. Others seemed not to have much knowledge of the festival.

- (c) Explain the challenges of citizenship a Muslim may face today.

Candidates answered this question often around the idea of Islamophobia and how this impacts Muslim life particularly living in western societies. Gaining marks

through issues around wearing the burka, finding time for worship during a workday, finding halal food in a secular society.

- (d) 'Marriage is the most important personal relationship in Islam.' Assess this statement

Candidates were able to show how this was the most important relationship through reference to the text and thus were able to develop their answers when they did this. They showed how marriage was important as it brings tranquillity and how this helps the ummah. Best candidates gave another viewpoint through relationships with parents or with Allah as an alternative proving popular.

Question 6

- (a) Identify one reason that would exempt a Muslim from fasting.

Almost all candidates answered this correctly

- (b) Describe what Muslims believe about the giving of Zakah.

This was well answered by candidates who found easy development in explaining what Zakah was and so attain higher marks.

- (c) Explain the conditions for the declaration of lesser jihad.

Candidates answered this well when understanding what the lesser jihad was. They were then able to develop, to varying degrees, in relation to the conditions of the lesser jihad and move into Level 2 and 3. Some candidates mixed up the lesser with greater jihad so dropped marks or mixed them both up in the answer which again led to marks being dropped.

- (d) 'Religious festivals are an essential part of Islam.' Assess this statement.

This was well answered by candidates who were able to explain why festivals are essential in Islam as a way of uniting the ummah in celebration and remembrance of the Islamic tradition. This was further enhanced by reference to the text and then the inclusion of another point of view to then move into Level 3. Candidates who only described what the festivals were limited only gained limited marks as did not refer to question.

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

- It is essential for candidates to read the questions carefully, so when answering the question there is a clear correlation that enables candidates to score higher marks.
- In a) questions it is important to give two clear reasons (1 in section 3) to get full marks
- In b) questions candidates need to show development to move beyond level one.
- In c) questions comprehensive development in relation to the question showing comprehensive knowledge and understanding are essential to attain Level 3.
- d) questions require a number of elements, and candidates need to make an effort to meet all of them – specifically they need to attempt to look at the issue from more than one point of view, and ideas should always be developed, and supported with religious teachings.
- A further requirement in d) questions, for those aiming to score marks in Levels 3, is for there to be depth to the discussion. Simple reasons gain marks of course, but the higher levels are gained by those who can show they have a comprehensive understanding of the issue raised and how it relates to the text provided.
- Because c) and d) questions are marked using a Levels rather than a Points based mark scheme, candidates need to be aware that a series of simple points will rarely allow them to gain more than half the available marks. They should focus on showing depth rather than just breadth of knowledge and understanding.

