

Religious Studies

Advanced GCE

Unit **G588**: Islam

Mark Scheme for June 2011

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1 To what extent is it justifiable, from the articles of belief, to describe Muhammad ﷺ as the founder of a new religion? [35]

AO1 The essay topic gives candidates the opportunity to explore and pull together the different parts of the specification so as to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of the distinctive features of Islamic beliefs.

Candidates might use information they will have studied for A/S level about the background of 'Pre-Islamic Arabia: historical, geographical and religious context with a consideration of Jewish, Christian and Pagan influences'.

Candidates might make reference to the revelation of the Qur'an to Muhammad ﷺ.

Responses are likely to demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the concepts which are listed in the specification as articles of belief: Allah, angels, scriptures, messengers, the last day, the divine decree.

These articles are also listed in Surah 4:135 which is a set text as is Al-Fatihah, Surah 1.

Most candidates are likely to group the articles of belief into three topics: Tawhid, Risalah and Akhirah.

AO2 Some candidates may wish to argue that some elements of particular articles of belief, for example angelology might echo the language of particular contemporary belief systems.

Though the question makes reference to articles of belief, matters of practice, such as comparison of the original Islamic prayer times with those of Judaism, are acceptable if made relevant to the argument.

Discussions are likely to centre around the fact that in the context of polytheistic Bedouism, Islam was a new beginning and the distinctive feature of the message of Muhammad ﷺ was emphasis on monotheism and castigation of idolatry.

Candidates might try to balance the evidence for a 'new' beginning with the fact that the revelation of the Qur'an was considered by Muhammad ﷺ to be the uncorrupted message linking back through time to previous revelations which had been distorted for instance to Ibrahim, Musa, Dawud and Isa.

2 Evaluate, with reference to the text, the relevance of the contents of Surah 4 for Islamic life today. [35]

AO1 The title of Surah 4 is Al Nisa' The Women. Candidates might explain that the surah not only deals with the rights of women, orphans and slaves in a humane manner compared with the conditions of life in tribal Arabia at the time of Muhammad ﷺ but it also contains other themes. In 136 for example, the key beliefs of Islam (which are immutable,) are listed.

The Surah opens with an appeal to the solidarity of humanity and, after the women, orphans, slaves and family relationships, the other themes are linked with a larger family, the community that was being established at al-Madinah.

Candidates are likely to explain something of the situation around the time that Surah 4 was revealed, probably after the battle of Uhud. The necessity of dealing not only with widows and orphans but with plots, traitors, hypocrites and deserters from the different factions, including Jews and Christians, which made up the fledgling community led to laying down principles which have governed Islam ever since.

AO2 Candidates might use examples from Surah 4 to demonstrate that the principles of the first Ummah are still in use, particularly in Muslim countries.

Candidates are likely to discuss the rules for marriage - up to four wives, prohibitions concerning marriage partners, fairer inheritance laws, adulteresses requiring four witnesses before punishment; forgiveness and reconciliation, light chastisement, women keeping what they earn etc.

Some candidates might move beyond the relevance of family issues to consider the extent to which the advice about being willing to die for Allah and permission to shorten prayers if in danger etc. are relevant today.

Candidates might argue that the Surah, like all revealed literature, is meant to be applicable through the ages. Though Muhammad ﷺ treated Jews and Christians well in al-Madinah, not only do the articles of Muslim faith still apply but so do his criticisms in Surah 4 of Jewish, Christian and Pagan beliefs.

3 To what extent are the differences between Sunni and Shi'a Islam significant? [35]

AO1 Some candidates might give introductory definitions on the lines of the terms in the glossary: 'Sunni are Muslims who believe in the successorship of Abu Bakr, Umar, Uthman and Ali (Radhi-Allahu-anhum - may Allah be pleased with them) after Muhammad ﷺ. Shi'a ('followers') are Muslims who believe in the Imamah successorship of Ali (Radhi-Allahu-anhu - may Allah be pleased with him) and eleven of his most pious, knowledgeable descendants.'

Other candidates might launch immediately into an account of differences of beliefs and practices for example about fasting, prayer times, zakah, etc. as well as generalisations and practices which are possibly local rather than usual differences.

A variety of acceptable examples might be given when illustrating or explaining what candidates see as differences. For instance Shi'a Muslims are not allowed to eat any food prepared by Jews or Christians; they are also allowed to pretend to be either Sunnis or Christians (taqiyya) if this will prevent them from being persecuted as the lie will not be a sin; etc.

Candidates are likely to point out that loyalty to the ahl-al-bayt – the house of the Prophet – is at the heart of Shi'a belief and practice. Responses are likely to include the leadership dispute that led to the original split. Some candidates might explain the importance of the Imamate for Shi'a Muslims with some reference to ziyara, minor pilgrimages to the tombs of the Imams, and extra festivals, especially the commemoration of the martyrdom of Husayn during Muharram.

Responses might also demonstrate awareness that Sunni Muslims regard themselves as true followers of the Sunnah and strict Sunni Muslims accuse Shi'a Muslims of bid'a (innovation), adding to Islam.

AO2 Some candidates might address the issue of significant and insignificant differences throughout the essay whilst others, equally successfully, might deal with it at the end.

Candidates are likely to identify authority as one of the main issues; whether the leadership of the Ummah should be a family line or whether Muhammad ﷺ intended elections to take place as the Sunni believe. Some discussions might refer to the dynasties in the later history of the Khalifahs and/or the political Khilafah.

Shi'a devotion to the ahl-al-bayt leads to beliefs and practices which may be argued to be significant differences of principle. Eg some Shi'a Muslims include 'Hazrat Ali is the friend of Allah' in the Shahadah, they reject the authority of the first three Khalifahs and some believe there is secret knowledge hidden in the Qur'an passed down from Ali through the Imams who had special divine authority.

Shi'a Muslims are about ten per cent of modern Muslims but rapidly growing in developing countries. Candidates might link this growth not only religiously but also geographically, historically or politically to the discussion of the potential significance of differences and the attempt of either or of both groups to return to fundamental values.

4 To what extent do all Muslims consider Jihad to be the sixth pillar of Islam? [35]

AO1 The Five Pillars, Shahadah, Salah, Zakah, Sawm and Hajj, which are in the A/S specification, have some relevance and are worth credit but candidates are likely to move speedily on to take the opportunity to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding about Lesser and Greater Jihad.

Candidates might define Jihad as 'striving' or 'trying one's utmost' to defend the faith against enemies of Islam and to gain Allah's favour. Candidates might explain that Jihad may involve physical battles. This is 'Lesser Jihad' and it must meet certain criteria, which candidates are likely to itemise.

'Greater Jihad' covers more spiritual endeavours such as struggling against evil in oneself. Some candidates might use further subdivisions and this is acceptable. Candidates might make reference to Jihad at the time of Muhammad ﷺ and to events in later Islamic history which led to the distinction being made.

N.B. Increasingly, some centres teach Lesser and Greater the other way round; and some of the media seem to be doing so. In fact, any division of Jihad is somewhat artificial as, for Islam, life is a unity and does not really have a dichotomy between the spiritual and the material.

AO2 The view under discussion reflects a controversial comment made in some text books about Jihad being seen as the sixth pillar. Candidates might cite some resources but this is not essential.

Responses might demonstrate some understanding of Jihad as part of the larger theological concept of living in submission and spiritually striving to preserve the Muslim way of life to establish peace, justice, the rule of Allah and the will of Allah for creation. Candidates might point out that Greater Jihad includes observance of all the Five Pillars.

Candidates are free in their discussions to come to any conclusion about the extent to which they perceive that all Muslims, some Muslims, individuals or groups of various persuasions or none, consider Jihad to be the sixth pillar.

Jihad is not literally the sixth pillar and candidates are likely to point out that the Five Pillars are immutable, on the grounds that Allah established them. Despite this, a case might be made that Jihad is treated as the sixth pillar and that for some Muslims total commitment to Lesser Jihad makes them martyrs for the faith and for all Muslims Greater Jihad is inextricably part of Islamic life.

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