

Religious Studies

Advanced Subsidiary GCE

Unit **G578**: Islam

Mark Scheme for January 2011

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- 1 (a) **Explain the main features of the social and religious background of Pre-Islamic Arabia.** [25]

AO1 Candidates might deal with the social and religious features separately or together and not necessarily in equal proportions.

Responses might include historical and geographical factors that influenced the situation in Arabia. Candidates might explain the significance of the trade routes and the importance of Makkah.

To address the question, explanations are likely to explain the religious influences on the region, particularly Jewish, Christian, Zoroastrian and Pagan.

Candidates might also include tribal culture, family life and the general environment into which Muhammad ﷺ was born.

- (b) **To what extent was Muhammad ﷺ a statesman as well as a prophet?** [10]

AO2 Candidates are likely to confirm the prophethood of Muhammad ﷺ by referring to him as the founder of Islam and the seal of the prophets, who received the Qur'an, spoke to angels and visited heaven, besides being referred to in the Shahadah.

Evidence that he was a statesman might be varied but equally acceptable, including traditional tales. In Makkah he had already shown ability to solve disputes and that was the reason he was asked to go to Yathrib, which became al-Madinah.

Candidates might refer back to the practices of tribal society mentioned in their responses to part (a) to show the improvements in the Ummah, and the theocratic ethical democracy that Muhammad ﷺ was establishing. Some might regard the battles as relevant to the question of effective leadership.

Most are likely to conclude that Muhammad ﷺ was equally good in both roles because he was chosen to be both by Allah. Some might, however, argue that the roles themselves are not of equal significance and, though the Ummah is a key feature of Islam, the role of the final prophet is predominant.

- 2 (a) **Explain how sawm might strengthen the Ummah.** [25]

AO1 Candidates might define the Ummah but most are likely to take the meaning for granted. The Glossary defines Ummah as 'Community. World-wide community of Muslims; the nation of Islam.'

Responses are likely to begin with a description of sawm as one of the Five Pillars and demonstrate understanding that it entails fasting during the hours of daylight in the month of Ramadan.

Candidates are likely to use the opportunity to provide further practical details of the fast and might explain that the Qur'an was first revealed to Muhammad ﷺ in Ramadan and that it is the month when Allah looks with special favour on humanity.

Explanations are likely to concentrate on addressing the potential for strengthening Ummah within the family, the community and worldwide. Some candidates might include reference to Zakat-ul-Fitr but this is not essential for full marks.

Responses might show some understanding of how reinforcing the sense of spiritual unity and cohesive communal solidarity might strengthen the awareness of the actual concept of Ummah in Islam.

- (b) **‘Sawm is more about an individual’s relationship with Allah than about being part of the Ummah.’ Discuss. [10]**

AO2 Discussions are likely to develop from points made in the first part of the question and candidates are free to champion either stance or to attempt to attain some compromise as the conclusion.

Candidates might use the opportunity to include material about discipline and self-denial and following the example of Muhammad ﷺ which might be more appropriate to this discussion than to the explanation required for part (a).

Arguments need to reflect accurate knowledge and sensitive understanding of the relationship of the individual and the community in Islam.

- 3 (a) **Explain the practical and theological considerations when adapting a building for use as a mosque. [25]**

AO1 Candidates might refer to converted houses in non-Muslim countries but any feasible adaptation of suitable buildings is acceptable. Practical and theological aspects might overlap or be dealt with separately. Both should be addressed but not necessarily in equal proportions.

To address the theological considerations, candidates might place the emphasis on describing and explaining the features which reflect beliefs about Allah and worship.

Responses are likely to include and explain the features which are essential for prayer, eg purification and a clean place and why the mihrab indicates the qiblah.

Candidates might take the opportunity to explain calligraphy, lack of images etc. in relationship to monotheistic worship.

- (b) **‘The mosque is central to all aspects of Muslim life.’ Discuss. [10]**

AO2 Candidates might begin by providing evidence to demonstrate the importance of the mosque in community worship and activities.

Candidates may concentrate on one case study or compare several mosques or respond in general terms. Examples of mosques from any country may be used in discussions.

Responses are likely to try to draw conclusions about the centrality of the mosque to all aspects of Muslim life by using arguments that reflect an accurate and balanced picture of Muslim beliefs and practice.

Some discussions might include comments on the unity in Islam of all aspects of religious worship and everyday living; all being equally part of submission to Allah. It might be argued by other candidates that Allah is central- not the mosque.

- 4 (a) **Explain why the Qur'an has absolute authority for Muslims.** [25]

AO1 Most candidates are likely to start with Laylat-ul-Qadr when Jibril appeared and commanded Muhammad ﷺ, who could not read nor write, to 'recite'. They might give further details of how Muhammad ﷺ received the revelations from 610 CE till 632 CE.

Candidates might explain the importance of the message the Qur'an contains about Allah, the one true God, the last judgement and the straight path to paradise. They might comment on the inimitability of the script and the effect it has on people.

Some candidates might give examples which show the importance of the Qur'an, the respect it is given and its status in matters of law and theology for Muslims of all persuasions before attempting to address why this is so.

Some responses are likely to show knowledge and understanding of the concept of revelation and make it clear that the authority is not just of Muhammad ﷺ the last prophet but of the very words of Allah and therefore 'absolute' authority. They might explain that Muslims believe the earlier revelations (the Sahifah, Tawrah, Zabur and Injil) of the eternal message (of which there is a heavenly original) became corrupted and Muhammad ﷺ is the final messenger, the seal of the prophets.

- (b) **'It does not matter if a Surah was revealed in Makkah or in al-Madinah.'**
Discuss. [10]

AO2 Candidates might point out that the belief that a sacred text is a revelation remains the most important factor, but discussions might consider the extent to which knowledge of the background or context might be helpful for the interpretation of any sacred text.

The best responses are likely to be those where candidates in their studies have been mindful of the advice in the specification about considering the potential differences in the Surahs revealed at Makkah and those at al-Madinah.

Candidates might, for example, show awareness that some Muslim scholars try to solve apparent contradictions by comparing the Surahs with events in the life of Muhammad ﷺ to see which command might chronologically supersede another.

There is no certainty about which Surahs were revealed at Makkah or al-Madinah but candidates might know that Surah 4 is usually interpreted as being about the social problems after the battle of Uhud and dealing with recalcitrants and hypocrites in the community of al-Madinah.

NB The text of Surah 4 is not studied in depth until the A2 specification. Surahs 1 and 96 are part of the AS specification.

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