

GCSE (9-1)

Examiners' report

RELIGIOUS STUDIES

J625

For first teaching in 2016

J625/02 Summer 2022 series

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Introduction

Our examiners' reports are produced to offer constructive feedback on candidates' performance in the examinations. They provide useful guidance for future candidates.

The reports will include a general commentary on candidates' performance, identify technical aspects examined in the questions and highlight good performance and where performance could be improved. A selection of candidate responses are also provided. The reports will also explain aspects which caused difficulty and why the difficulties arose, whether through a lack of knowledge, poor examination technique, or any other identifiable and explainable reason.

Where overall performance on a question/question part was considered good, with no particular areas to highlight, these questions have not been included in the report.

A full copy of the question paper and the mark scheme can be downloaded from OCR.

Advance Information for Summer 2022 assessments

To support student revision, advance information was published about the focus of exams for Summer 2022 assessments. Advance information was available for most GCSE, AS and A Level subjects, Core Maths, FSMQ, and Cambridge Nationals Information Technologies. You can find more information on our [website](#).

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Paper 2 series overview

GCSE Religious Studies Paper 2 is the Islam: Beliefs and teachings & Practices paper. It assesses candidates' knowledge and understanding of key elements of Islam as it is practised in the contemporary world and also the ability to discuss and evaluate the impact of Islamic belief and practice on different groups of Muslims.

All questions and sections of questions are compulsory. Most candidates attempted the entire paper, with 1(d) being the question most commonly missed out.

Candidates who performed well on this paper generally demonstrated strong examination skills, including effective use of their examination time, careful reading of exam questions and the application of material to the specific question that had been asked. Their responses showed not only knowledge of a range of relevant material but understanding of the demands of a question; for example, when asked in the question to consider different views (as for Question 1(d)) they ensured that difference was explicitly addressed.

Candidates who did less well had often missed out or not attempted some questions. They were also often those who were restricted in their discursive responses to part (e) questions. These questions in particular showed a distinction between candidates who clearly understood and responded to the specific demands of the question and those who did not. The candidates achieving marks at the lower end often had relevant knowledge and were able to organise it broadly into opposing views, but discussion and analysis were absent. Where a diversity of perspectives was included, these were likely to be presented as additional knowledge rather than as arguments or perspectives in a discussion, with all the arguments on one side being presented together before all the arguments on the other side. It should be noted that the part (e) questions do not demand opposite views, but rather different ones. However, the identification of distinct sets of views does not amount to a discursive engagement sufficient to achieve the higher levels. Candidates who deployed their knowledge in the form of arguments, offering justifications, counter-arguments and/or critique of the justifications were better able to demonstrate the skills of evaluation and analysis necessary for the highest level marks.

Candidates who did well on this paper generally did the following:	Candidates who did less well on this paper generally did the following:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • demonstrated familiarity with important concepts in the study of Islam and understanding of how they related to specific questions • showed awareness of how religious belief and practice impacts on/relates to everyday living • showed recognition of difference within Islam. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • showed difficulty in relating understanding of common and divergent views to the issue in the question • showed confusion over meaning of technical terms used in the question, preventing successful application of knowledge • demonstrated little discursive engagement with the issues.

Question 1 (a)

1 (a) Describe the origins of the Hajj.

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..... [3]

Question 1 (a) Most candidates were familiar with the term ‘the Hajj’ as one of the Five Pillars of Islam and were therefore able to attempt a response to this question. Creditable responses could give a developed account of the origins of one specific element of the Hajj, with the story of Hagar searching for water being the most popular choice, or they could briefly identify the origins of more than one. More generalised responses about connections with the lives of prophets were also creditable.

However, many candidates did not gain any of the available marks for this question because they focused solely on the term Hajj, either ignoring or misunderstanding the need to consider origins. Responses of this kind tended to either describe the events which take place during the Hajj, explain why it is important to Muslims or offer reasons why they might wish to do. None of these constitutes an answer to the question asked. Many responses were mixed, as shown in Exemplar 1, with unnecessary definitional material being given before any creditable material, meaning the time has not been used effectively. In Exemplar 1 the first sentence contains a lot of correct material but none of it is relevant to answering the question and it gains no marks, while the other two sentences both contain creditable references to the origins of events on Hajj.

Exemplar 1

Hajj is one of the 5 pillars of Islam and is a ~~the~~ pilgrimage to Mecca that Muslims must make once in their lifetime. It originates from when ~~the prophet Muhammad~~ Mecca was taken by Muhammad and the idols were destroyed. One of Muhammad's last acts was to make a pilgrimage to Mecca. [3]

Misconception



That the term ‘the Hajj’ was the only part of the question to focus the response.

Question 1 (b)

(b) Describe the role of Mika'il in Islam.

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The majority of candidates gained at least some of these marks. Credit was given for identifying Mika'il as an angel, for general points about the role of angels (such as obeying Allah) and for specific examples of Mika'il's responsibilities. Where marks were lost it was usually because the response had asserted Mika'il performs a specific role which is attributed to another named angel; the most common confusion of this kind was to say that he will blow the trumpet on Judgement Day.

There were also some responses which did not clearly address the role. Responses of this kind drifted into descriptions of the nature of angels or even accounts of their creation, showing good knowledge about angels within Islam but knowledge which was not relevant to the question asked.

Question 1 (c)

(c) Give **three** Muslim beliefs about the Qur'an.

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2

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3

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..... [3]

Almost all candidates achieved all available marks here. A very broad range of material was creditable, ranging from beliefs about how copies of the Qur'an should be treated to beliefs about its origins.

Question 1 (d)

(d) Outline the importance of the Five Pillars of Islam for different groups of Muslims.

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While the majority of candidates did attempt this question, showing knowledge of the concept of the Five Pillars, the content of their responses indicated that this was a challenging question. Almost all responses correctly identified at least some of the Five Pillars by name and most offered a generalised reference to importance, usually related to the need to demonstrate submission to the will of Allah. However, few responses made any reference to different groups of Muslims at all; Exemplar 2 is a good example of this approach to the question, identifying two of the pillars by name and considering the importance of each but doing so as if these were universal views. There were also many responses which did mention difference but only in passing, saying that both Sunni and Shi'a consider the Five Pillars vital and then continuing on to the same kind of general description.

There were also some responses which confused the Pillars with the Articles of Faith.

The best responses were able to identify difference in importance either through different practices – such as Shi'a Muslims combining salah prayers – or by comparing the Five Pillars to the Ten Obligatory Acts. Exemplar 3 shows a response which is based on the universal importance of the pillars but which considers differences in their expression through Sunni and Shi'a practice.

Exemplar 2

shahadah
sawm

One reason why the five pillars are important to Muslims is because they are a guide how to live like Allah would want to. For example one of the pillars represents charity. This pillar says that rich people should give 2.5% of their wage to the poor. This is important because it shows that charity is important to Allah.

Another reason why the five pillars are important to Muslims is because one of them is sawm. Sawm is where you fast. This is important because Muslims understand that through this you are committing yourself to Allah and their teachings.

Exemplar 3

The ~~five~~ five main pillars of Islam include Hajj, Sawm, Salah, Zakah and Shahada. Both Shia & Sunni Muslims believe in these 5 as they are extremely important acts of worship in Islam. In Zakah, Sunnis believe that 2.5% annual earnings should be given as Zakah & sadaqah to charities. However, Shias give 20% of their annual earnings as Islamic tax as the Quran quotes "From what you acquire, a fifth of it is ~~your~~ mine". The 20% given by Shia is called Khums. Khums is an obligatory thing in Shia Islam as it is part of the 10 obligatory acts of Islam. Shahada is key for all Muslims as it states that ~~there is no~~ "There is no lord but Allah and Muhammad is the messenger of Allah" which supports the idea of Tawhid and belief in Prophet hood (Rasuliah) which is important as it is in Usul-ad-din and for Sunnis. Sawm is also obligatory as it is done in the month of Ramadan which is celebrated in both Sunni & Shia Islam. 161

Question 1 (e)

(e) "It is important for all Muslims to share the same core beliefs."

Discuss this statement. In your answer, you should:

- Analyse and evaluate the importance of points of view, referring to common and divergent views within Islam.
- Refer to sources of wisdom and authority.

[15]

 Spelling, punctuation and grammar [3]

Most candidates were able to offer a response to this question, identifying the concept of core beliefs and recognising that there are areas of divergence within Islam. Responses often included detailed accounts of the origins of the division between Sunni and Shi'a Islam, usually accompanied by an account of a shared concept such as tawhid.

Where responses offered discussion or analysis it was most commonly focused around the question of when divergent views become different religions, with arguments around which kinds of belief matter the most. Some responses considered whether difference of belief is significant if it does not lead to distinctions of practice while others reflected on the connection between core belief and sin, usually by considering the point at which a different belief might be considered shirk.

Weaker responses were often wholly descriptive, showing a depth of knowledge about the difference between Sunni and Shi'a Islam but without any attempt to reach a judgement on the stimulus. By contrast a smaller number offered a discussion around diversity within religion in general terms, rather than using Islam-specific material to consider the issue.

Question 2 (a)

2 (a) Give **three** of the roots of 'Usul ad-Din' in Shi'a Islam.

1

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2

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3

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[3]

Most candidates attempted this question and many of them gained all three marks. The English names were creditable, but many candidates were familiar with the Arabic terms. Two common points of confusion were to give al Qadr/predestination and Angels, suggesting a confusion between the Sunni Articles of Faith and the Shi'a Roots of Usul ad-Din.

There was a substantial minority of responses that did not gain any of the marks. Most of these gave examples from the Five Pillars or the Ten Obligatory Acts

Question 2 (b)

(b) Give **three** reasons why a Muslim might be exempt from performing the Hajj.

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2

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3

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[3]

Most responses offered three reasons. However, there was an almost universal confusion, possibly a conflating of reasons for exemption from fasting with those for exemption from Hajj, which led to almost all responses including pregnancy, menstruation, or both. Neither is a creditable response. A smaller number of responses offered 'travelling', further suggesting the confusion with exemptions from sawm.

Misconception

 That the exemptions for the Hajj are the same as those for Sawm.

Question 2 (c)

(c) Describe what happened on the Night of Power.

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[3]

The majority of candidates responded well to this question, giving accounts of the angel Jibr'il visiting the Prophet in Cave Hira and instructing him to read. Some responses confused the Night of Power with the Night Journey.

Question 2 (d)

(d) Outline why removing evil from society is important for Muslims.

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..... [6]

Most responses focused on Muslims rejecting evil, most commonly through a consideration of jihad but also by considering the Ten Obligatory Acts. However, some did not then relate this knowledge of Islamic beliefs to the removal of evil from society and, since this was explicitly required by the question, the available marks were limited thereby.

Responses which did connect with the question of society often took the view that removing evil would reduce temptations to sin and/or reduce human suffering.

Question 2 (e)*

(e)* "Muslims can celebrate their festivals anywhere."

Discuss this statement. In your answer, you should:

- Analyse and evaluate the importance of points of view, referring to common and divergent views within Islam.
- Refer to sources of wisdom and authority.

[15]

Most responses demonstrated good knowledge about Muslim festivals, how and why they are celebrated. Eid ul-Fitr, Eid ul-Adha and Ashura were included in almost all responses, with some also including Eid ul-Ghadeer. Some candidates included Hajj as a festival, with most who did so using it to argue against the question since Hajj can only take place in Makkah. However other responses, which did not explicitly consider the Hajj, oversimplified this argument to the point of inaccuracy by suggesting that Eid ul-Adha can only be legitimately celebrated by Muslims who are on Hajj. The laws surrounding animal slaughter in different countries also often formed a part of considering this festival.

Many responses showed a high level of knowledge of divergence within Islam in relation to Ashura and the reasons it is celebrated by Shi'a and not Sunni Muslims. Many also showed some analytical thinking around this festival, considering the social issues that might be raised if it were widely observed in public spaces. Some responses extending this kind of thinking to mass gatherings and the need to be good neighbours to those who were not celebrating.

The importance of community and the need to act in a manner pleasing to Allah were widely offered as conclusions on the issue, with many candidates arguing that as long as you have these things nothing else is important.

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