



GCSE

Religious Studies (Short course)

8061/3

Report on the examination

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General comments

Some students were well-prepared for this short course exam with the most successful demonstrating a coherent and wide-ranging knowledge of Islam. Some were able to use specialist terminology to good effect, and some (but fewer than expected) supported question 1.4 with quotations and appropriate sources of authority to enable the 5th mark to be attained. Centres should remember that a source of authority must be cited, for example Qur'an, Hadith, sunnah, Muhammad, etc, and it is not sufficient to simply give a quotation without the source.

The paper tested specific knowledge of concepts and individuals in the specification and required answers that were focused on this. Some students did this well, but a significant number wrote about related matters, e.g. judgement, when heaven was the target knowledge. Centres are advised to encourage students to unpack questions carefully in order to sharply focus on the question and that all aspects of the specification should be taught to the same high level, even the more difficult concepts, and both Sunni and Shi'a beliefs as indicated.

Some of the evaluative responses for the 1.5 question were well articulated and even the answers attaining lower marks demonstrated some knowledge and understanding of the Islamic religion in their responses, even if these were not overly detailed or in depth. Some students were able to remember the differences in beliefs between Sunni and Shi'a and use appropriate key terms and better answers scored marks on both assessment objectives.

Question 1.1

A very significant number of students did not score the mark on this question, and it is suspected that they did not read it carefully. It is important that students know both Sunni and Shi'a teachings and that they read the question carefully to check whether they are required to identify whether something 'is' or 'is not' one of the options.

Question 1.2

This appears to have been more accessible than last year's question, but only books recognised by Islam were awarded marks. A number of students answered 'Bible' which was not credited, and 'scrolls' was deemed too vague but 'Scrolls of Ibrahim/Abraham' was credited. Overall, the vast majority of students secured one of the marks. It should have been possible to get both quite easily as Qur'an and Hadith are basic teachings in both Sunni and Shi'a.

Question 1.3

A surprisingly low number of students attained full marks for this question. There were too many who wrote about Muhammad, and, on the whole, this question was less successfully answered than last year. Where students did know about Ibrahim, they generally gave good influences, which was necessary to secure full marks, and the rubric for the question seems to be well understood. Credit was given for generic influences of prophets where it could be considered as relating to Ibrahim in some way, but this limited answers to lower marks.

Students needed to show specific knowledge about Ibrahim, otherwise this would disadvantage those who had studied and revised specific content.

Question 1.4

Some students appeared to have difficulty being specific about heaven. Less successful answers seem to have blurred concepts of afterlife, heaven and hell, judgement, *Barzakh*, and matters of post-death into one idea. This limited marks as credit could not be given for two beliefs that were not specifically about heaven. Some students had clearly revised answers about these other aspects, which they then gave for this question, and too many wrote the whole answer about how Muslims are judged for heaven without writing about heaven itself.

Credit-worthy answers often included the types of descriptions of heaven seen in the mark scheme, but there were a few that referred to Lesser Jihad in quite simplistic terms. Having said that, more students were awarded 3 or 4 marks than the previous year but only just over one in ten attained full marks. There were a significant number who did not give source references which was surprising since it was expected that most would be able to reference Qur'an as a source of the descriptions they gave. It is worth noting that some students wrote about the influence of heaven, confusing requirements with question 1.3 and this cost them marks.

Question 1.5

Fewer students gained the top level of marks than last year, but it was close. The question was answered better in the borderline 6-8 marks, with students including some development and specific religion. Many seemed to answer as if the issue was *either* omnipotent *or* one of the other 'omnis', as if they were mutually exclusive; this limited AO2 analysis. There were some good answers at the top end of level 4 that were able to relate all of God's qualities to an overall perception of Allah and to show how the 'omnis' complemented individuals' understanding of Allah.

Many referenced the 99 names, with simpler answers being along the lines of 'if there are 99 names, why does one have to be best?' and more complex answers, exploring how 'best' could be interpreted in different circumstances/for individuals at different times. A minority of students referred to the Paradox of the Stone but not in terms of Islamic understanding. A number of students drifted into writing about Christians/Christian beliefs; it is recommended that teachers continue to encourage proof-reading of answers if time permits.

SPAG

It should be noted that in addition to spelling and grammar, the mark here takes into account use of specialist terms. Anecdotally, there were not quite as many scripts as last year where the quality of handwriting was poor. This is a pleasing improvement; although every attempt is made to decipher what is written, it can make marking very difficult. Centres are encouraged to continue the support and further practice in this area.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

Grade boundaries and cumulative percentage grades are available on the [Results Statistics](#) page of the AQA Website.