



GCSE

# **Religious Studies B**

8063/2X Section A: Perspectives on faith (Islam)

## Report on the examination

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## General Comments

Students' overall performance on the paper this year was promising, it was evident that centres had supported students well in preparing for this paper. A broad range of responses showed a secure understanding of key Muslim beliefs and practices, with many students producing well-reasoned and thoroughly considered answers. Breadth of knowledge was a notable strength for many. In the strongest responses, students demonstrated real insight by applying this knowledge thoughtfully to the issues raised. There was a marked improvement in the quality of answers to the longer, essay-based questions, which is a testament to the hard work of both students and centres.

As in previous years, students across the ability range were able to engage with this paper successfully. This demonstrates the accessibility of the content for all. Most students attempted the majority of questions, and some showed commendable creativity when tackling areas where they were less confident. Less successful responses were often the result of misreading questions or underestimating the depth required for higher-mark items. A small minority of students left questions blank; centres should reiterate the need for students to attempt all questions, even when unsure of the topic.

Last year's report highlighted a recurring issue on questions 01.4 and 02.4, where students either did not include a source of authority or omitted the name of the source. It was encouraging to see this was less common this year. Centres should continue to reinforce the importance of including and naming a source in these questions.

Questions 01.5 and 02.5 were well attempted by many students. The strongest responses demonstrated a clear understanding of the demands of the questions and met these effectively. They constructed arguments using well-selected, relevant information. Higher-performing students went beyond factual recall, engaging fully with the question and showing thoughtful analysis. By weighing arguments and forming judgements, they accessed the higher marking levels. Further development of evaluation and appraisal would enhance outcomes even more in future examinations.

The average spelling, punctuation, and grammar (SPaG) mark for questions 01.5 and 02.5 was two marks. Students who used a wider range of key terminology were more likely to achieve three marks. Legibility remained an issue for a small number of students. Centres should continue to emphasise the importance of clear handwriting alongside the accurate use of key terms.

## Question 1 Islam: Beliefs

### 01.1

The majority of students, around 80%, answered question 01.1 correctly by identifying Akhirah as the term referring to life after death.

### 01.2

This question was generally well answered, with over 75% of students listing two accurate Muslim beliefs about the prophet Adam.

Many correctly included beliefs such as: Adam was the first man on earth / the father of the human race / created by God from the dust of the earth / the first prophet / superior to the angels / he was given understanding by God / and passed on his knowledge to humanity / he was taught the names of things by God / he built the first ka'ba. Incorrect responses most often described beliefs about other prophets, such as Ibrahim, Musa, Isa, or Muhammad. A minority of students left this question blank.

### 01.3

Question 01.3 was accessible for many students, with around 50% achieving four marks. Many students accurately outlined the characteristics of heaven and hell, drawing on teachings from the Qur'an and other recognised Islamic sources of authority. Students often referred to the belief that righteous actions are rewarded with paradise, whereas wrongdoing may lead to punishment in hell. Some responses combined descriptions of heaven and hell with explanations of the factors, such as deeds and faith, that influence entry to each.

Some students included two contrasting views but did not develop one or both, resulting in a loss of marks. Others referred to only one view without offering a contrast, which prevented them from accessing the full four marks available.

A number of responses discussed the Day of Judgement or Barzakh. Although these references showed wider knowledge, they were not credited, as the question specifically required information about heaven and hell.

### 01.4

Many students performed well on this question. Over half achieved at least four marks by giving a detailed explanation of two different beliefs. Responses commonly referred to Muslim beliefs about the characteristics of God, linking these to his relationship with the world.

Students often made reference to God's immanence, explaining how this belief reflects his closeness and involvement in the world and in the lives of believers. They also referenced God's transcendence, describing how this highlights his absolute power, uniqueness, and existence beyond the limitations of the physical world. Some students drew on other beliefs about God, such as beneficence, omnipotence, and omniscience, successfully linking these attributes to God's relationship with creation.

This question requires reference to scripture or another source of Muslim belief and teaching to achieve full marks. As in previous years, many students omitted this element. Those who did include a source often used variations of 'We are closer to him than his jugular vein' (Qur'an 50:16) when referencing God's immanence.

To ensure students who include a source of Muslim belief and teaching receive the mark for this, centres should further encourage them to name the source within their answer. For example, 'the Qur'an says...' or 'it is mentioned in the hadith that...'. They could also place the source in brackets after the quote or summary of what it says. Provided the source is named, a paraphrase of what it says is acceptable and will be credited.

### 01.5

Question 01.5 was generally well attempted by many students. Most demonstrated a sound understanding of the importance of holy books in Islam and presented clear arguments for and against the statement. Many supported their reasoning with evidence and explanation,

placing a large proportion of answers within levels 2 and 3. Overall, the quality of responses had improved compared with last year, with more students demonstrating evaluation and engaging fully with the question.

The strongest responses engaged directly with the central issue, offering coherent arguments and thoughtful judgements. These students showed how belief in holy books could be seen as fundamental while also recognising alternative views. More able students explored the relationship between holy books, prophethood, and other Articles of Faith, arguing these concepts depend on each other. Some also discussed the role of angels in transmitting revelation, illustrating their importance in relation to holy books. These responses displayed depth of understanding and strong use of evaluation.

In support of the statement, common arguments included ideas such as, holy books can be read or heard daily, helping Muslims feel connected to God; they are divinely revealed and infallible; the Qur'an is the highest authority in Islam, containing moral guidance, laws, and teachings about God; and other scriptures, including the Torah, Psalms, Gospel, and Scrolls of Abraham, also proclaim monotheism and provide guidance.

Arguments supporting different views often focused on the importance of other Articles of Faith. Many students argued that belief in tawhid is the most important, as it underpins all other beliefs and is affirmed in the Shahadah. Others emphasised the supremacy of God's will, the role of angels in communicating messages, or the significance of risalah, with prophets guiding Muslims to understand holy books. Some highlighted belief in akhirah, as awareness of the Day of Judgement encourages Muslims to live according to God's will. A number also argued that the six Articles of Faith are equal in importance, with each informing a different aspect of belief.

Lower-mark responses often confused the Articles of Faith with the Five Pillars of Islam or the Five Roots of Shi'a Islam. They argued against the statement using examples such as prayer, fasting, or the role of imams. As these points were outside the focus of the question, they could not be credited.

Centres should continue to encourage students to develop evaluative arguments fully and support their reasoning with Muslim teachings. They should also ensure students address all elements of the question to access the highest levels.

## SPaG

Around 7% of students achieved zero marks for SPaG due to not attempting to answer question 01.5. Centres should continue to stress the importance of attempting every question, even briefly, so that marks for SPaG remain accessible.

## Question 2 Islam: Practices

### 02.1

Students performed very well on question 02.1, with almost 90% correctly identifying wudu as the ritual washing carried out before prayer. This strong performance highlights the importance of secure knowledge of key terminology across all abilities.

### 02.2

Performance on this question was mixed. Around half of the students demonstrated secure knowledge of khums and achieved full marks, while others showed limited understanding. Many responses referred to themes such as charity, helping those in poverty, or supporting the mosque or imam. Brief answers, including single-word responses such as 'charity' or 'helping others', were credited where they conveyed accurate information.

Some students confused khums with zakah, incorrectly identifying khums as one of the Five Pillars of Islam. Although both involve charitable giving, centres should ensure that students are supported in clearly distinguishing between these practices.

### 02.3

Question 02.3 was generally well attempted, with over half of the students achieving four marks. The strongest responses referred to the communal dimension of attending the mosque for prayer and explained its significance in Muslim life. Many students also noted that attending the mosque can encourage others to pray, bear witness to faith, and set a positive example. A large number referred to the sense of belonging and awareness of the worldwide ummah that this practice fosters. Others highlighted how praying with others can strengthen faith, particularly during times of need or persecution. Several responses additionally mentioned how the imam's sermon during Friday prayers can deepen knowledge of Islam, provide moral guidance, and offer encouragement.

Some students, however, focused on describing the mosque or outlining what happens there without addressing how attending influences the lives of Muslims. These responses did not fully meet the requirements of the question and therefore lost marks. This highlights the need for centres to reinforce the importance of addressing all aspects of the question.

### 02.4

This question proved challenging for many students, with a significant proportion demonstrating limited knowledge of the significance of Ashura for Muslims. Almost 45% either gained no marks or did not attempt the question. The strongest responses commonly referred to the martyrdom of Husayn ibn Ali at the Battle of Karbala and its central role in Shi'a commemorations of Ashura today, often highlighting its themes of sacrifice, justice, and standing against oppression. Some also mentioned the Sunni tradition of observing Ashura as a day of voluntary fasting, which Prophet Muhammad encouraged in commemoration of Allah saving the Israelites from slavery in Egypt, an event associated with Musa (Moses). A few responses additionally referred to other traditions, such as the belief that the ark of Nuh (Noah) came to rest on this day after the flood.

Where sources of authority were included, students generally cited hadith directing Muslims to fast on Ashura, such as Sahih al-Bukhari 2004, Sahih Muslim 1130, or Jami' al-Tirmidhi 752. However, some erroneously attributed these or other hadith to surahs from the Qur'an, which prevented them from accessing this mark.

In future examinations, centres should focus on developing students' ability to use sources accurately within the 5-mark questions. Greater emphasis on both the historical context of Ashura and its continuing significance for Muslims today would also strengthen performance in this area.

## 02.5

Question 02.5 was generally well answered, with many students engaging successfully with the evaluative demands of the question. Most students were able to compare the importance of fasting during Ramadan with other Muslim practices, addressing both sides of the argument effectively. Responses frequently explained why fasting might be seen as the best way to show love for God, while also considering alternative practices.

The strongest responses were coherent, well-structured, and demonstrated thoughtful judgement. These students explored fasting as a practice that requires significant self-discipline and sacrifice, showing complete submission to God. They also highlighted that fasting goes beyond abstaining from food and drink, involving spiritual reflection, moral behaviour, and increased empathy for the poor. Many referenced that it is a command from God, which demonstrates obedience and love. High-level responses often included Muslim teachings and integrated them smoothly into their reasoning.

Arguments supporting the statement often stressed that fasting focuses Muslims entirely on God, purifies the soul, and deepens appreciation for his blessings. Many students also noted that enduring hunger helps believers empathise with those in poverty, leading to acts of service that further demonstrate their devotion.

Arguments for alternative views commonly compared fasting with other practices. Many students argued that prayer is more important because it is performed five times daily throughout the year, showing consistent devotion. Others suggested that giving zakah demonstrates love for God through self-sacrifice to help others, while hajj was described as a demanding journey involving multiple acts of devotion. Some also argued that following the example of Prophet Muhammad, or practising all Five Pillars collectively, reflects deeper love for God because these encompass the full breadth of Islamic belief and practice.

Lower-mark responses tended to describe fasting during Ramadan without evaluating why it may or may not be the best way to show love for God. Others listed practices without comparing them to fasting, or omitted reference to Muslim teachings, limiting their access to higher levels. Some confused fasting with other Muslim beliefs or practices.

Centres should continue to encourage students to fully develop their reasoning, integrate Muslim teachings effectively, and address every element of the question to achieve the highest marks.

## SPaG

SPaG marks on question 02.5 were slightly higher than those on question 01.5. This likely reflects the overall stronger performance on content in question 02.5. Higher-level responses demonstrated secure subject knowledge and made greater use of subject-specific terminology, contributing to the slight improvement in SPaG scores for this question.

Fewer students, around 5%, missed out on SPaG marks on question 02.5 compared with question 01.5, as more students attempted this question. This indicates both improved performance on question 02.5 and a greater willingness among students to engage with it.

## Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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