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Examiners' Report
Principal Examiner Feedback

November 2020

Pearson Edexcel International GCSE
In Religious Studies (4IS1) Paper 1

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November 2020

Publications Code 4IS1_01_2011_ER *

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Introduction

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This is the second paper of the new specification and has kept on board the respected centres, and their candidates, who sat the old specification, as much as possible during these times. The aim of the paper is to be accessible to candidates of both the Shi'ah and Sunni faith traditions. The paper enables this to occur through the various sections, questions and awarding of marks in relation to these. The paper attracts candidates from a wide range of countries, and they demonstrate a full range of candidate ability. There are many candidates who score high marks across all sections of the paper, demonstrating a detailed knowledge and understanding of Islam. On the other hand, there are some candidates who appear less well-equipped to deal with the full demands of the paper. In some cases, they may demonstrate a good level of learned knowledge, but then fail to analyse Muslim beliefs, often stating the beliefs quite effectively, but failing to go on to explain or evaluate them.

Due to these exceptional circumstances, it is not possible to provide a comprehensive, overall assessment of candidate performance. However, this report will highlight what lessons can be learnt from the way in which questions were answered.

SECTION A – The life, teachings and achievements of the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh). There are two questions in this section, question 1abcd and question 2abcd. Candidates must pick one question and answer all parts of this question.

Question 1

1 (a) Give two details of the conversation between Muhammad (pbuh) and Jibrail in the cave of Hira. (2 marks)

This was well answered by most candidates, identifying 'Recite' often in their answers.

(b) Describe the events of the boycott in Makkah.

Overall a well answered question. The b) question is set as a 3-mark answer. To gain top marks candidates must give good correct descriptive points with an added.

element of understanding for full marks. For example: The non-believers of Makkah decided a boycott would defeat the Muslims, this meant the Muslims could get no supplies or food, this brought great hardship to Muhammad (pbuh) and his followers. This is descriptive in showing why the boycott happened and the impact it had.

(c) Explain why the Prophet's final sermon is important for Muslims.

This question required specific knowledge of the Final Sermon. Those who knew the accounts of the sermon answered the question effectively, often gaining full marks. However, some candidates seemed unfamiliar with the specific teachings of the Final Sermon and gave general answers about aspects of Islamic teaching.

(d) 'The Night of Power (Night of Decree) is the most important event in Islam.' Assess this statement.

The d) question is seeking students to do the following to gain top level. Firstly, read and understand what the question is asking. Secondly, link the text to the question in their answer. Thirdly, show the ability to include another point of view in their answer to show good evaluation skills. This question did not often see candidates bring in another point of view. Many candidates made good links between the text and the question. Some candidates answered the question without referring to the text and so dropped marks. Well answered by students

Question 2

2 (a) Identify two ways Allah communicates with humans

This was well answered with the majority of students who answered it gaining full marks.

(b) Describe what happened at the Battle of Trench.

Students demonstrated a good knowledge of the Battle of Trench. Full marks on this question was frequently attained who identified the battle correctly.

(c) Explain why it was important for the Prophet to establish mosques immediately after the Hijrah.

A number of students dropped marks by being too descriptive in answering this question so answering the question from an A01 perspective only. The c) question is.

designed to encourage students to give further development in their answer through A02 skills. Students who did this by identifying the need to establish mosques and then further developed this by linking this how this helped establish Islam and spread the faith demonstrated good knowledge and understanding and so were able to access higher levels.

(d) Assess the view that Muhammad is more important than any of the other prophets.

Students who understood the question and linked it to the text in answering the question fully, attained higher levels and marks. Another point of view in candidates' answers were not often seen in this question, most wrote about why Muhammad (pbuh) is more important than any of the other prophets without showing any further knowledge or evaluation.

SECTION B – The key beliefs, practices and features of the early Muslim community founded by the Prophet. There are two questions in this section. Candidates must pick one question and answer all parts of this question.

Question 3

3 (a) Identify two features to the role of the angel Izrael.

This was mostly well answered but a number of candidates did mix the roles of the angels up and so lost marks.

(b) Describe what Islam teaches about paradise (Jannah).

This was well answered by candidates as all who answered it know what Jannah was. Marks were dropped mostly as candidates did not give full description to move marks from 2 to the full 3 on offer.

(c) Explain why Islamic etiquette in the treatment of other people is important for all Muslims.

This was well answered by students who understood what etiquette was and how it was important in demonstrating its importance in being a good Muslim. Higher levels were attained by candidates who further developed their answer to show how Islamic etiquette was a way of demonstrating the greatness of the tradition.

(d) 'Nothing happens unless Allah decrees it.'

Candidates dropped marks by not understanding the question fully. Some candidates just focused on why we must follow what Allah tells us rather than the broader context of predestination and free will. However, candidates that made this connection and linked this to the text were able to access higher levels. Another point of view was not often seen in this question.

Question 4

4 (a) Give two events that will happen at the final judgement.

This was well answered by candidates with judgement and the sound of the trumpet featuring predominantly.

(b) Describe what is contained in the Scrolls of Abraham.

This was not well answered as most candidates did not fully understand what the 'Scrolls of Abraham' were and just tried to describe who he was or got mixed up with another prophet.

(c) Explain why Allah's omnipotence is important for Muslims.

This was well answered by candidates who knew what omnipotence referred to. They identified what this was in relation to Allah with may further developing the question in relation to creation and the will of Allah.

(d) 'Belief in Akhirah affects the way Muslims live more than any other belief.'

Some answers focused on what Akhirah was and did not derive from this position. This meant they did not get to grips with the question fully. Others focused on the question well but did not relate it to the text in anyway. Higher levels were attained by candidates who answered question directly linked to the question. Another point of view linked to other important beliefs, for example Shahadah, showed high evaluation skills from some candidates, but this was not often.

SECTION C – Living the Muslim life today. There are two questions in this section. All parts of both questions must be answered by all candidates.

Question 5

5 (a) Give one action performed by Muslims when fasting during Ramadan.

This was answered extremely well but very few candidates not getting a mark.

(b) Describe the purpose of families in the Islamic faith.

This was well answered with students easily identifying purposes of families and most accessing at least 2 marks out of the 3 available.

(c) Explain why Eid-ul-Fitr is an important festival for Muslims.

This was overall a well answered question with candidates gaining at least the 3 marks available for A01 skill by giving a good descriptive understanding of why Eid-ul-Fitr is an important festival. A number of candidates developed this further through AO2 skills by identifying the importance of the context of the festival in deepening the relationship of the worshipper with Allah. Most marks were dropped by candidates who answered with the importance of Eid-al-Adah.

(d) 'Performing Salah is the most important obligation of Islam.'

This was a well answered d) question overall with many students finding an alternative point of view easily. Higher levels awarded, as is the case with all d) questions, with an answer closely linked to the text. Weaker candidates repeated the content of the text without any evaluation or relation to the question.

Question 6

6 (a) Identify one act that pilgrims perform while on Hajj.

Very few candidates did not gain the mark available on this question.

(b) Describe how Muhammad (pbuh) gave a good example to Muslim leaders today.

This question was well mostly well answered with candidates referring to examples of the Prophet as a good path for Muslim leadership today.

(c) Explain why the paying of Khums is important for Muslims.

This was a well answered question in candidates identifying the importance of paying Khums as a way for helping those in need, with higher level candidates linking this idea further to the fair distribution of wealth and promotion of a just inclusive society for all. A number of candidates mixed up Zakat with Khums, but still gained marks for their explanation of giving to help the less fortunate and promote a better society.

(d) 'The Shahadah contains all the important beliefs of Islam.'

This was a well answered question by candidates who followed the required evaluation and assessment, using A02 and A03 skills, in relating the text directly to the question. It was also a question where a number of candidates were able to identify another point of view. Weaker candidates repeated text without much evaluation.

Advice on how to improve performance

Based on their responses to this paper, candidates are offered the following advice to improve performance:

- In b) questions make sure one point made, with a minimum of two, has an added element of understanding to gain full marks
- In c) questions make sure candidates read the question fully in order to understand exactly what the demands of the question fully.
- In c) questions remind candidates that in order to gain higher levels they must demonstrate, using A02 skills, understanding of the key concepts the question is relating to.
- In d) questions candidates must firstly read the question to understand what it is asking. Candidates then must carefully read the text and start to make links between the text and what the question is asking. This should then be the forming of a good answer aimed at higher level attainment.
- In d) questions candidates should always look to add a different point of view into their answer in order to attain higher levels.

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