



# Examiners' Report Principal Examiner Feedback

November 2020

Pearson Edexcel International GCSE  
In Religious Studies (4RS1) Paper 02

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## **Introduction**

This paper contributes a little less than 40% of the overall course award for iGCSE Religious Studies (4RS1). It is divided into 6 parts, for the six religions outlined by the Specification. Candidates answer all questions from one religion of their choice. For each religion there are three questions, corresponding to the three sections outlined in the Specification, where details of the assessment content are provided. Each question is divided into three parts, reflecting a balance of the Assessment Objectives. Centres are expected to use the Edexcel specification, rather than other published resources, when planning and teaching the course content. The examination is written based on the specification content, and teaching should be firmly rooted in the demands of the specification.

This is the second year of awarding for this Pearson/Edexcel iGCSE qualification. However, it should be noted that this specific paper was sat by only a small number of candidates, due to the exceptional circumstances of the Covid outbreak, and the decision to award grades in the summer of 2002 based on teacher assessment. Almost all of the small number of candidates opted to answer questions on Religion B (Christianity) or Religion D (Islam).

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.

- In a) questions some candidates were able to provide two developed responses, which is required to access all 4 available marks.
- In b) questions, candidates often gave a series of simple reasons in answer to the question, and were able to gain marks only up to the top of Level 1, a maximum of three marks. Better candidates developed their reasons, and a small number were able to gain the full six marks available for these b) questions.
- In c) questions, candidates are asked to develop a balanced discussion of the topic raised by the question, and to show a comprehensive understanding of the implications raised for the specified religion. Centres are reminded that all c) questions have the following requirements:

In your answer you should include:

- reference to teachings
- other (divergent) points of view – either within the religion or from other religions
- your opinion/point of view using reasoned arguments
- a balanced conclusion.
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Some candidates were able to provide a full and balanced discussion and were able to access marks at Levels 3 and 4. However, most candidates either

provided a simple discussion, without development, or a one-sided argument. This limited their ability to gain marks above Level 2, a maximum of six out of the ten marks available.

### **Individual Questions in Religions B and D (Christianity and Islam)**

#### 4RS1\_02 Religion B Christianity

1 (a) Outline two temptations experienced by Jesus in the wilderness. (4 marks)

This question required specific knowledge of the Gospel accounts of the temptations. Those who knew the accounts answered the question effectively, often gaining full marks. However, some candidates seemed unfamiliar with the stories.

1 (b) Explain the importance of the Bible for Christians. (6 marks)

Most candidates had at least a basic understanding of the importance of the Bible and were able to gain marks. This is an example, however, of where many students failed to develop their responses or demonstrate a deeper understanding of the importance of the Bible for Christians. A series of simple reasons limited many candidates to Level 1.

1 (c) "Ordained ministers are important for all Christians." Discuss this statement considering the arguments for and against. (10 marks)

Although some candidates seemed not to fully understand the concept of 'ordained ministers' most were able to recognise that some Christian denominations had worship and community leaders, and were able to provide a basic discussion of this topic, by comparing Catholic and Quaker approaches for example. Very few candidates were able to take this discussion to any depth, however, and were unable to offer a fuller discussion of why there was a disparity in approach between various Christian groups. Some were able to point to the notion of 'ordination' and 'priesthood', and their significance for some Christians, and to compare this with the concerns of some Christians about appointing 'intermediaries' other than Jesus himself. Such an understanding, as an example, was able to take these candidates to the higher levels of marks.

2 (a) Outline two ways in which Christians celebrate Christmas. (4 marks)

Almost all candidates were able to point to aspects of the Christian celebration of Christmas, such as attendance at special religious services, and were then often able to develop these descriptions by describing the nature of such events. As sometimes happens with questions about Christmas, some candidates mentioned presents and special meals, but without referring to their significance for Christians, and therefore failed to gain the development marks.

2 (b) Explain why Jerusalem may be an important place of pilgrimage for Christians. (6 marks)

Those candidates who knew which events of Jesus' life occurred in Jerusalem were able to gain good marks on this question, and again the main weakness was lack of development. However, some candidates were unable to distinguish between events in Bethlehem and Jerusalem, and answered entirely from the perspective of Jesus' birth. Such answers could not be rewarded.

2 (c) "Easter is the most important Christian festival." Discuss this statement considering the arguments for and against. (10 marks)

Most candidates had a fair understanding of the events of Easter, in which context marks were awarded for reference to all the events from the Last Supper to the Resurrection. Because they were also able to explain aspects of the importance of Christmas, many candidates were also able to create a discussion of the merits of both events for the Christian faith. The weakness was mainly that most candidates were only able to produce a simple discussion, and most answers lacked a deeper understanding of Easter, for example, in terms of atonement and salvation. Those who did were able to access the higher levels of marks.

3 (a) Outline two external features of a Christian church. (4 marks)

Overall this was a well answered question, with many candidates knowing about such features as spires and crosses. They were able to develop their answers by explaining their significance. Those who failed to score good marks on this answer either mistook internal for external features, or failed to develop their answers.

3 (b) Explain why funeral ceremonies are important for Christians. (6 marks)

Overall this was not a well answered question, because many candidates seemed unfamiliar with the features of a Christian funeral, and were unable to explain their importance. Those who knew about such aspects as prayers for the mourners or the sermon or eulogy, for example, were then able to explain why such aspects might have value, and were able to gain up to four of the six marks. Very few were able to gain higher marks because their understanding lacked depth.

3 (c) "Christian churches should be more than just places of worship." (10 marks)

Not many candidates seemed well prepared to discuss the various functions of Christian churches. They were familiar with them as places of worship, but even then the answers were often descriptive rather than part of a discussion. Not many seemed aware that some Christian churches are also used as social centres, or as venues for Christian education, for example. It is important that candidates are aware of the ways in which different Christian denominations make use of church buildings, and also the rationale behind such uses (such as providing a service to the local community).

#### 4RS1\_02 Religion D Islam

1 (a) Outline two teachings from the Prophet Muhammad's final sermon. (4 marks)

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.

1 (b) Explain the importance of the Qur'an for Muslims. (6 marks)

Most candidates had at least a sound simple understanding of the importance of the Qur'an, such as that it contains Islamic teaching, and were able to gain marks on this question. This is an example, however, of where many students failed to develop their responses or demonstrate a deeper understanding of the importance of the Qur'an for Muslims. A series of simple reasons limited many candidates to Level 1.

1 (c) "The imam is an important leader for Sunni Muslims." Discuss this statement considering the arguments for and against. (10 marks)

Most candidates were able to answer this question, having a sound basic knowledge of the role of the imam in Sunni Islam. Some candidates mistakenly referred to Shi'ah ideas about the imamate, whilst others were unable to do more than describe the imam's role. Whilst this latter approach was able to gain some marks, it often failed to lead to a discussion about whether and how that role might be of significant importance to Sunni Muslims. This meant that there was often limited discussion and development.

2 (a) Outline two features of the celebration of Eid ul-Adha. (4 marks)

This was a well answered question, and often candidates were able to develop their answers and gain full marks by outlining features and then explaining their significance or importance. Those who failed to gain marks often confused Eid ul-Adha with Eid ul-Fitr.

2 (b) Explain the importance of Makkah for Muslims. (6 marks)

Generally, candidates had a good understanding of how Makkah features within Muslim faith and practice, and this was a well-answered question. A few candidates confused Makkah with Madinah, and others failed to demonstrate a deeper understanding of how Makkah helps Muslims towards a fuller understanding of their faith. As always, this lack of development often limited marks to Level 1.

2 (c) "Madinah is the most important city for Muslims." Discuss this statement considering the arguments for and against. (10 marks)

Most candidates took the approach of comparing the role of Madinah in Islam with that of Makkah. This was an entirely legitimate approach, and many candidates were able to gain good marks on this question. Occasionally the answers were confused in their understanding of the events of Muhammad's life in the two cities, and also their significance for Islam today. More often, the weakness was that the discussion was limited to a descriptive approach, and few candidates were able to express reasons why one city might be considered more important than another (or why it would be inappropriate to seek to make such a distinction).

3 (a) Outline two internal features of a mosque. (4 marks)

This was a well answered question, with most candidates able to identify internal features such as the mihrab, or the prayer hall, and they were also able to explain their significance by way of development, thereby gaining full marks.

3 (b) Explain the importance of the marriage ceremony for Muslims. (6 marks)

Many candidates were able to identify aspects of the Muslim marriage ceremony, such as the role of the guardian, the signing of contracts and so forth. However, many candidates failed to take their answers beyond this descriptive level. They did not develop the idea of the contract, for example, by explaining how it sets out the responsibilities of both parties. In these b) questions, explanation by description can gain marks, but for higher marks candidates do need to address issues of significance and importance, and some candidates fail to do so.

3 (c) "Mosques are essential to Muslim communities." Discuss this statement considering the arguments for and against. (10 marks)

The most noticeable feature of answers to this question was that candidates were able to offer many reasons why mosques are important, even essential, for the Muslim community – as places of prayer and education for example. It was noticeable how few candidates made any attempt to consider another point of view. It is not necessary for candidates to advocate any such view, but it is important for them to show that they are aware that another perspective is possible, such as that Muslims can pray anywhere, and that 'the whole world is a mosque'. To gain marks in the higher levels, candidates must make an effort to develop a balanced discussion.



### **Advice on how to improve performance**

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

- It is essential for candidates to read the questions carefully, because a single word or term can make the difference between a correct and a completely wrong answer. An example would be the 'internal' and 'external' features of a religious building.
- In a) questions it is important to develop two responses. Such development can be explained by adding more information to a description, or by a simple explanation of the aspect outlined.
- In b) questions candidates need to do more than explain by description. Something may be important because of the role it performs, but in b) questions that can only be the beginning of an answer. Such answers need to be developed with reference to the significance and importance of the reason given.
- In b) questions development is essential to reach beyond Level 1, and even giving a large number of simple reasons is likely to mean that a maximum of three out of six marks will be gained.
- c) questions require a number of elements, and candidates need to make an effort to meet all of them – specifically they need to attempt to look at the issue from more than one point of view, and ideas should always be developed, and supported with religious teachings.
- A further requirement in c) questions, for those aiming to score marks in Levels 3 and 4, is for there to be depth to the discussion. Simple reasons gain marks of course, but the higher levels are gained by those who can show they have a comprehensive understanding of the issue raised and how it relates to the religion in question.
- Because b) and c) questions are marked using a Levels rather than a Points based mark scheme, candidates need to be aware that a series of simple points will rarely allow them to gain more than half the available marks. They should focus on showing depth rather than just breadth of knowledge and understanding.

