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GCSE (9-1)

Examiners' report

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J625

For first teaching in 2016

J625/07 Summer 2023 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 answers is 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.

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Paper 7 series overview

Candidates studied four main areas and were assessed by a compulsory question on each area, each following the same four-part structure.

Overall, the standard was comparable to 2022. There was an increased entry from a greater number of centres this year.

Candidates overall tried hard and there appeared to be a greater number who answered all questions and completed the paper; this had been an issue last year.

There was evidence that candidates had been well taught and had a good background in the topics under consideration. This was not always translated into higher marks for particular questions, because some candidates did not respond according to the Assessment Objective (AO) or directly answer the question set. Understanding the requirements of the question is frequently an area which candidates could improve on, and this year was no exception.

This year's topics included a wide range, from civil partnerships, men and women's roles, visions as a form of religious experience, the duty of Khalifah, reconciliation and forgiveness, views about what Allah is like, different attitudes towards violence to achieve peace and the basis of Muslim values.

It was evident that candidates knew something about every topic so they had been comprehensively taught, of which centres should be complemented. The priority for many will be to understand and address the demands of specific questions set.

Candidates who did well on this paper generally:

made an attempt to answer all questions: there was a notable improvement on last year, and most candidates wrote something for every question on the paper

- showed good understanding and use of the specialist vocabulary, and there were very few candidates who could not access questions due to lack of understanding of key words from the specification
- referred to sources of wisdom and authority, such as the Qur'an, Hadith, Muhammad's sayings and actions, teachings from Imams and scholars, and Islamic traditions commonly seen as an authority by communities
- attempted to refer to different points of view in part (d) questions: even if the effectiveness of arguments made varied, most candidates tried hard to distinguish different perspectives.

Candidates who did less well on this paper generally:

- responded to part (c) questions with explanations suitable for AO2 questions; many gave descriptions more relevant to AO1 part (b) type questions
- responded with a single view in part (c) questions when the question specifically asked for different views
- made a judgement or personal conclusion in part (d) responses: this often came at the end when made although it did not have to, but in many responses there was no evaluative judgement and instead just a recognition that different views existed which commonly held responses at Level 2
- did not understand some key concepts or topics such as values, visions or the role of Christianity in Britain today, as required by particular questions.

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4	
1	Relationships and families
	(a) Describe one Muslim teaching about contraception.
	[3]
not por to	s question was very well answered. Many wrote that contraception was permitted provided that it was permanent and was carried out within marriage for reasons such as to avoid ill health of the mother avoid poverty by having a large family. This question was about one teaching which could be made any Muslim or Muslim group, it did not have to be a universally agreed on teaching, so those which he Muslims might agree with were given marks.
~	action 1 (h)
Qu	estion 1 (b)
Qu	estion 1 (b) (b) Describe different Muslim attitudes towards civil partnerships.
Qu	· ·
Qu	· ·
Qu	· ·

Most candidates mistook civil partnership for gay marriage. While they are often considered together, they are two different things, and there are people who may have civil partnerships for other legal reasons. It was still valid for candidates to include Muslim attitudes which suggested that marriage should be prioritised, and referred to the tradition that marriage is 'half of faith', according to a Hadith tradition. Some candidates noted that there were Muslims who took the attitude that as civil partnerships were permitted and agreed on under the law of the land, they should also be welcomed by Muslims and culturally accepted.

Misconception



A common misconception is that civil partnerships are the same as same-sex marriage. While some same-sex couples choose civil partnerships, and historically many did before same-sex marriage was legalised, civil partnerships also include legal agreements formalising many forms of relationship.

Question 1 (c)

(c)	Explain why some Muslims have different attitudes towards the purpose of the family.
	You should refer to sources of wisdom and authority in your answer.
	18

Many candidates described or even made a list of purposes of the family, such as to raise children and provide for one another, as well as care for the elderly. Few identified reasons for different attitudes. Those who did mentioned different interpretations according to circumstance or according to what they considered relevant and acceptable in sources of wisdom and authority. So, some might consider it important to pass on the faith due to the importance given by the authority of tradition in birth and naming ceremonies, which signify that a child will be brought up as a Muslim. Others suggested that the purpose of the family might be to provide a loving and caring environment, whatever form a family might take, and that different forms should be accepted according to the norms of modern society, as that is what people have become socially accustomed to and accept when following some modern interpretations of Islam.

Question 1 (d)

(d) 'Discrimination on the basis of gender has no place in Islam.'

Discuss this statement. In your answer, you should:

- Draw on your learning from across your course of study, including reference to beliefs, teachings and practices within Islam.
- Explain and evaluate the importance of points of view from the perspective of Islam. [15]

Spelling, punctuation and grammar [3]

Most candidates answered this question very well. Many referred to Muhammad's sayings which mention that men and women both have the same religious duties. They also mentioned his examples, the Sunnah, and how he helped mend his own clothes and respected his wife Khadijah who had her own career. A few candidates misread the question as discrimination in general and referred to racism and other forms of discrimination. An alternative view was that Islam accepts some discrimination in giving women different roles from men, but that male Muslims do not see this in a negative light.

Assessment for learning



The AO2 Level 3 descriptor includes the statement: 'evidence of judgement on the issue in the stimulus and some conclusion to the discussion.' This means that a recognition of different views without some kind of judgement will restrict a response to Level 2. Some candidates who recognised different views and did so quite well could improve their marks significantly by ensuring they include a judgement.

Question 2 (a)

2 The existence of God

(a)	Outline how Muslims believe Allah might be revealed through scripture.		
	[3		

This question was very well answered. Most mentioned descriptions of Allah in the Qur'an, often exemplified by naming some of the 99 names of Allah in translation. Others mentioned how Allah was revealed through the general descriptions and teachings about the oneness of God in the Qur'an. Scripture refers to Islamic writings, and references to the Hadith were also accepted in answer to this question.

\bigcirc	oction	2	(h)
WL	estion	_	(\mathbf{v})

(b)	Describe visions as a form of religious experience for Muslims.
	[6]
experier as a rea	andidates made good responses and referred to Sufis, poets, dreams of individual Muslims and notices of people such as Ibrahim. Some made mention of the Night of power, but this is regarded I, tangible event by Muslims rather than a vision or event in a dream, so that was not accepted in king of this question. Despite this, many answered this question quite well.
Quest	ion 2 (c)
(c)	Explain the reasons why there are different Muslim views about what Allah is like.
	You should refer to sources of wisdom and authority in your answer.

The focus of the question was on explaining why there are, not describing, different views on what Allah is like. Some successful responses mentioned that God was compassionate and judging, so the 99 names included so many different characteristics that they led different Muslims to focus on different views of God. Others wrote that the views of some were affected by their experiences of life. If they had experienced suffering, they might take a different view of what Allah was like from those who had felt success. Some mentioned sectarian or theological differences between Sunni, Shi'a, Sufi, Ashari and Mu'tazilah Muslim schools of thought. These were more advanced points, but relevant if correctly referred to.

Exemplar 1

There a	re many	different	views about
			Some musling
			and hadiths
			ref it like
er metalhe			
			in Created
Adam f			
MuSlims	_		
			net Allan
			ed Adam wity
			treat it
			l We Shouldn't
take it			

This question did not ask for description, but for explanation of why there are differences between different Muslim views about what Allah is like. This response is placed in Level 2 because it offers a clear explanation: because some Muslims take the Qur'an and hadiths literally and others metaphorically. This also refers to sources of wisdom and authority by mentioning the texts, and this is further added to with reference to the 'hands' of God. This might be taken further and differences between schools of thought mentioned. A few candidates noted that some rejected literal descriptions of Allah, such as the Mu'tazilah, because they believed Allah has to be totally separate from anything which could be seen to have human form. Further elaboration might help this move into Level 3, or perhaps taking a different approach such as those Muslims who might focus on different characteristics of God, ranging from immanent to transcendent. Importantly, the candidate could point out the focus or experience in their worship, not just to describe Allah, as marks here are for explanation.

Assessment for learning



Part (c) questions are marked according to AO2, and the command word given is 'explain'. This means that descriptions of knowledge do not gain marks here. Many candidates wrote lengthy descriptions of what Allah is like, but could have achieved more marks by focusing on the explanations of reasons why there are different views about what Allah is like.

9

Question 2 (d)

(d) 'The most important duty for Muslims today is to act as Khalifah (custodians/stewards) of the world.'

Discuss this statement. In your answer, you should:

- Draw on your learning from across your course of study, including reference to beliefs, teachings and practices within Islam.
- Explain and evaluate the importance of points of view from the perspective of Islam. [15]

Spelling, punctuation and grammar [3]

This question was very well answered. Most candidates wrote about the importance of looking after Allah's world since the days when Prophet Adam was sent into the world as a test, and that all humanity follows in his footsteps. This was contrasted against other Islamic duties, especially commands to fulfil the Five Pillars and five daily prayers, which could be seen as a command important to gain entry into heaven in the afterlife and therefore an important duty. This question refers, as in the specification, to the duty to be custodians or stewards. Some candidates mistook this and thought it referred exclusively to the early Caliphs and did not refer to the custodians or stewardship.

Question 3 (a)

(a)

3 Re	ligion,	peace	and	confl	ict
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Give three ways in which Muslims might work for social justice.
1
2
3
[3

This question was well answered. Many identified protests for social justice, charity work or donation which aided social justice, or any other relevant activity, so were generally given marks. Note that if the candidate identified two very similar ways, one would be given a mark, for example, protest and demonstration gained a total of 1 mark; or give to charity and give to good causes got a total of 1 mark, but they would not be given 2 separate marks.

Question 3 (b)

(b)	Describe ways in which individual Muslims apply religious teachings about peace.
	[6]

There were some successful responses of a personal nature. Mention was made of not fighting back or swearing or abusing people who say negative things about you. Some mentioned a tradition of Muhammad about staying calm, praying or even lying down if feeling angry to achieve peace. Some elaborated to explain how a Muslim might experience being called bad names or abused for their appearance, but even so responded peacefully. Note that this question was about individual Muslims, not about holy war for a community.

Misconception



The topic of peace includes many different aspects including individuals and peace. Some candidates thought that it was about war involving countries. This question asked for descriptions about individuals and peace-making, so rules about holy war were not relevant. Centres might consider broadening their teaching of this topic and addressing individuals' roles in peace-making specifically.

Question 3 (c)

peace.
You should refer to sources of wisdom and authority in your answer.

(c) Explain why Muslims might have different attitudes towards the use of violence to achieve

Violence might be used to achieve peace in context of a holy war. Some candidates described the conditions for holy wars, and some described positions on pacifism. However, the focus was about why different individual Muslims might have different attitudes, so it was necessary to add to any described reasons why a person might take that view. It might be because of their interpretation of rules of war in Islam, their personal experience of conflict, or their general commitment to achieving peace through particular means.

Assessment for learning



Reasons why different Muslims might have different views depends on their interpretation of sources of wisdom and authority. It is worth remembering to include these in part (c) and (d) responses as otherwise the Level of Response given may be lower. Sources may include the Qur'an, Hadith, examples or Sunnah of Muhammad, teachings from scholars and Imams and Islamic traditions handed down and culturally accepted in communities.

Question 3 (d)*

(d)* 'Reconciliation is for Muslims but forgiveness is only from Allah.'

Discuss this statement. In your answer, you should:

- Draw on your learning from across your course of study, including reference to beliefs, teachings and practices within Islam.
- Explain and evaluate the importance of points of view from the perspective of Islam. [15]

This question was one of the best part (d) questions answered and candidates responded well. Many made the point, backed by traditions from the Qur'an and Hadith, that Muslims would be rewarded for showing forgiveness to others, and that this was liked by Allah. Some mentioned that it was important to reconcile with others before going on the Hajj pilgrimage. Another view was that Allah's forgiveness was far more important because it determined whether a Muslim might achieve an afterlife in heaven. As with other part (d) responses, those who gave a conclusion or evaluative judgement were able to achieve a higher level than those who recognised different views without completing this step.

13

Exemplar 2

reconciliation is the act of making up win someone
after ausuments. Forsiveress is given after you repent
6 someone. The statement suggests that reconciliation
is for muslims but progressers is any yoursens from Allon
Some may agree that reconcidation is for muslim
because maintainin good relations win people is
encouraged by the prophet. The prophet said "do
you know what is better than faiting and praying?
14's keeping good relations". By reconciling with
one another muslims can ensure hot they leep
peace and they can sain more reward from Allah.
Some may nowever disagree and say that nulling
Can reconcile with Allah, for example if they have
converted out of faith and they coment back in ,
If a muslim sins a lot then they may think
they need to recarcile with god, but as god has
grace for mankind and is "as ghat far" (the great
forgiver), he muslims need to repent and they can
reconcile with good.
Some musicing now agree hot forgiverers to only
from Allah as when we sin, we are expected to

repent and all god to forgive w for our actions.
only Allah has the power to Porsive us as he's "of
grafter, (we short ensyer). Homer zone wan
disagree and say how for siveres can also be from
Other people. The Qu'an states "the best of you
are those who can for sive in the hear of the
moment, impusing possing each other is also andia
for Muslims. It's also believed that when you sin
against someone Allan doesn't for give you his the
person for siver you, Rusher stressing that Parsiveress
should also come from people, not just from Allah,
as people need to Porsive you before Allah com. It's
also believed in Islam travil you don't posive
Some one Array will being you born forward on he
day of judgement in Front of him to explain.
To conclude both peace and reconciliation
can be achieved between both mus lins and
Augho Muslims should attempt to reconcile and
Porgice cach other as much as possible, but the
Whinate Bisheress for sin i from god, and it's
What will help you reach be onen.

This is a successful response which is placed in Level 4 for AO2 and given full marks for AO1. A clear and precise definition in the introduction helps frame the argument from the start. The second paragraph then begins by agreeing with the statement. Reference is made to the prophet with a quotation, relevant to the response, and satisfying necessary referencing to sources of wisdom and authority for AO1.

The argument then turns to forgiveness from God and reference to a name of God to back up the point, 'al-ghaffar' the forgiver. This is used to support an alternative point of view, that forgiveness is from Allah and not from other Muslims.

The argument is clear, concise and well structured, building up from one paragraph to the next. A personal conclusion reaches a judgement, that ultimate forgiveness is from God, adding some fine-tuning to the discussion and showing awareness of the significance of the topic, by referring to 'ultimate' because it will help a Muslim 'reach heaven'.

The response might go on and explain that judgement occurs individually, and a Muslim could not call on others to support them when facing Allah's judgement, to further extend this last point and reach a higher mark within Level 4 for AO2.

16

Question 4 (a)

•	Dialogue between religious and non-religious beliefs and attitudes		
	(a)	Describe one Muslim belief about pluralism.	

Most candidates understood that pluralism referred to interfaith relations and entry into paradise in the afterlife. Only one belief was required, so it did not matter if it was held by all or many Muslims or just a few, as there are different beliefs on this topic. As 3 marks were available, those who were able to fully describe or explain their response were able to gain all 3 marks.

Exemplar 3

Muslims believe that even non-Muslims have a chance to go to Al-Jannah is Allah wills so after & judging what kind of life a person has led.

For this type of short answer question, marked according to AO1, marks were given for a statement supported by any combination of development and exemplification. Here, a clear statement is given, that Muslims recognise non-Muslims have a chance to go to Al-Jannah (heaven). This is then elaborated with the words 'if Allah wills after judging'. It could be further expanded for a third mark, such as depending on the person's actions and intentions, or perhaps whether they have heard and rejected the message of Islam or not.

Question 4 (b)

Candidates wrote that Islam prohibited forced marriages, but many Muslims encouraged arranged marriages. The potential for clashes came according to where the line is drawn between encouraged and pressurised, with some conflict between generations and those wishing to choose their own partner as is their legal right under secular legal systems. A few candidates mentioned that tradition, sometimes called Islamic, was really cultural tradition and not the same thing. Those who could differentiate and explain the potential for difference and therefore clash were able to achieve the highest marks.

Question 4 (d)*

(d)* 'The basis of Muslim values is completely different from that of agnostics.'

Discuss this statement. In your answer, you should:

- Draw on your learning from across your course of study, including reference to beliefs, teachings and practices within Islam.
- Explain and evaluate the importance of points of view from the perspective of Islam. [15]

This question was not well answered. Most candidates wrote that agnostics were unsure about God, and that Muslims believe in God and explained this. This was not what the question was asking about. The question required some explanation of values. Those who did address the question were able to find some common ground referring to fairness, equality, community support – support for the poor, action against discrimination and so on. The main difference was the basis of those values: with agnostics not accepting them due to religious revelation but rather on the basis of logic and human compassion, and Muslims taking them on the basis of revelation in the Qur'an.

Misconception



Values are not the same as beliefs. Values may be things like compassion for the poor and disadvantaged; respect for individuals and their right of expression; tolerance of those of different points of view and so on. The basis of values may indeed be belief derived, but there is a distinction to be made.

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