



GCE A LEVEL MARKING SCHEME

SUMMER 2025

**A LEVEL
UNIT 3 - OPTION B
A STUDY OF ISLAM**

1120UB0-1

About this marking scheme

The purpose of this marking scheme is to provide teachers, learners, and other interested parties, with an understanding of the assessment criteria used to assess this specific assessment.

This marking scheme reflects the criteria by which this assessment was marked in a live series and was finalised following detailed discussion at an examiners' conference. A team of qualified examiners were trained specifically in the application of this marking scheme. The aim of the conference was to ensure that the marking scheme was interpreted and applied in the same way by all examiners. It may not be possible, or appropriate, to capture every variation that a candidate may present in their responses within this marking scheme. However, during the training conference, examiners were guided in using their professional judgement to credit alternative valid responses as instructed by the document, and through reviewing exemplar responses.

Without the benefit of participation in the examiners' conference, teachers, learners and other users, may have different views on certain matters of detail or interpretation. Therefore, it is strongly recommended that this marking scheme is used alongside other guidance, such as published exemplar materials or Guidance for Teaching. This marking scheme is final and will not be changed, unless in the event that a clear error is identified, as it reflects the criteria used to assess candidate responses during the live series.

Marking guidance for examiners, please apply carefully and consistently:

Positive marking

It should be remembered that candidates are writing under examination conditions and credit should be given for what the candidate writes, rather than adopting the approach of penalising him/her for any omissions. It should be possible for a very good response to achieve full marks and a very poor one to achieve zero marks. Marks should not be deducted for a less than perfect answer if it satisfies the criteria of the mark scheme.

Exemplars in the mark scheme are only meant as helpful guides. Therefore, any other acceptable or suitable answers should be credited even though they are not actually stated in the mark scheme.

Two main phrases are deliberately placed throughout each mark scheme to remind examiners of this philosophy. They are:

- “Candidates could include some or all of the following, but other relevant points should be credited.”
- “This is not a checklist, please remember to credit any valid alternatives.”

Rules for marking

1. Differentiation will be achieved on the basis of candidates' response.
2. No mark scheme can ever anticipate or include every possible detail or interpretation; examiners should use their professional judgement to decide whether a candidate's particular response answers the question in relation to the particular assessment objective.
3. Candidates will often express their ideas in language different from that given in any mark scheme or outline. Positive marking therefore, on the part of examiners, will recognise and credit correct statements of ideas, valid points and reasoned arguments irrespective of the language employed.

Banded mark schemes

Banded mark schemes are divided so that each band has a relevant descriptor. The descriptor provides a description of the performance level for that band. Each band contains marks. Examiners should first read and annotate a candidate's answer to pick out the evidence that is being assessed in that question. Once the annotation is complete, the mark scheme can be applied. This is done as a two-stage process.

Banded mark schemes stage 1 – deciding on the band

When deciding on a band, the answer should be viewed holistically. Beginning at the lowest band, examiners should look at the candidate's answer and check whether it matches the descriptor for that band. Examiners should look at the descriptor for that band and see if it matches the qualities shown in the candidate's answer. If the descriptor at the lowest band is satisfied, examiners should move up to the next band and repeat this process for each band until the descriptor matches the answer.

If an answer covers different aspects of different bands within the mark scheme, a 'best fit' approach should be adopted to decide on the band and then the candidate's response should be used to decide on the mark within the band. For instance if a response is mainly in band 2 but with a limited amount of band 3 content, the answer would be placed in band 2, but the mark awarded would be close to the top of band 2 as a result of the band 3 content.

Banded mark schemes stage 2 – deciding on the mark

Once the band has been decided, examiners can then assign a mark. During standardising (at the Examiners' marking conference), detailed advice from the Principal Examiner on the qualities of each mark band will be given. Examiners will then receive examples of answers in each mark band that have been awarded a mark by the Principal Examiner. Examiners should mark the examples and compare their marks with those of the Principal Examiner.

When marking, examiners can use these examples to decide whether a candidate's response is of a superior, inferior or comparable standard to the example. Examiners are reminded of the need to revisit the answer as they apply the mark scheme in order to confirm that the band and the mark allocated is appropriate to the response provided. Indicative content is also provided for banded mark schemes. Indicative content is not exhaustive, and any other valid points must be credited. In order to reach the highest bands of the mark scheme a learner need not cover all of the points mentioned in the indicative content, but must meet the requirements of the highest mark band.

Awarding no marks to a response

Where a response is not creditworthy, that is it contains nothing of any relevance to the question, or where no response has been provided, no marks should be awarded.

A Level Generic Band Descriptors

Band (marks)	Assessment Objective AO1 – Section A questions [30 marks] <i>Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of religion and belief, including:</i> - religious, philosophical and/or ethical thought and teaching - influence of beliefs, teachings and practices on individuals, communities and societies - cause and significance of similarities and differences in belief, teaching and practice - approaches to the study of religion and belief.
5 (25-30 marks)	• Thorough, accurate and relevant knowledge and understanding of religion and belief. • An extensive and relevant response which answers the specific demands of the question set. • The response shows an excellent standard of coherence, clarity and organisation. • The response demonstrates extensive depth and/or breadth. Excellent use of evidence and examples. • Thorough and accurate reference made to sacred texts and sources of wisdom, where appropriate. • Insightful connections are made between the various approaches studied (within and/or across themes where applicable). • An extensive range of views of scholars/schools of thought used accurately and effectively. • Thorough and accurate use of specialist language and vocabulary in context. • Excellent spelling, punctuation and grammar.
4 (19-24 marks)	• Accurate and relevant knowledge and understanding of religion and belief. • A detailed, relevant response which answers the specific demands of the question set. • The response shows a very good standard of coherence, clarity and organisation. • The response demonstrates depth and/or breadth. Good use of evidence and examples. • Accurate reference made to sacred texts and sources of wisdom, where appropriate. • Purposeful connections are made between the various approaches studied (within and/or across themes where applicable). • A range of scholarly views/schools of thought used largely accurately and effectively. • Accurate use of specialist language and vocabulary in context. • Very good spelling, punctuation and grammar.
3 (13-18 marks)	• Mainly accurate and relevant knowledge and understanding of religion and belief. • A satisfactory response, which generally answers the main demands of the question set. • The response shows a satisfactory standard of coherence, clarity and organisation. • The response demonstrates depth and/or breadth in some areas. Satisfactory use of evidence and examples. • Mainly accurate reference made to sacred texts and sources of wisdom, where appropriate. • Sensible connections made between the various approaches studied (within and/or across themes where applicable). • A basic range of scholarly views/schools of thought used. • Mainly accurate use of specialist language and vocabulary in context. • Satisfactory spelling, punctuation and grammar.
2 (7-12 marks)	• Limited knowledge and understanding of religion and belief. Basic level of accuracy and relevance. • A basic response, addressing some of the demands of the question set. • Partially accurate response, with some signs of coherence, clarity and organisation. • The response demonstrates limited depth and/or breadth, including limited use of evidence and examples. • Some accurate reference made to sacred texts and sources of wisdom, where appropriate. • Makes some basic connections between the various approaches studied (within and/or across themes where applicable) • A limited range of scholarly views/schools of thought used. • Some accurate use of specialist language and vocabulary in context. • Some minor, recurring errors in spelling, punctuation and grammar.
1 (1-6 marks)	• Very limited knowledge and understanding of religion and belief. Low level of accuracy and relevance. • A very limited response, with little attempt to address the question. • Very limited accuracy within the response, with little coherence, clarity and organisation. • The response demonstrates very limited depth and/or breadth. Very limited use of evidence and examples. • Little or no reference made to sacred texts and sources of wisdom, where appropriate. • Very few or no connections made between the various approaches studied (within and/or across themes where applicable) • Little or no use of scholarly views/schools of thought. • Some grasp of basic specialist language and vocabulary. • Errors in spelling, punctuation and grammar affect the meaning and clarity of communication. N.B. A maximum of 3 marks should be awarded for a response that only demonstrates 'knowledge in isolation'.
0	• No relevant information.

Band	Assessment Objective AO2 - Section B questions [30 marks] <i>Analyse and evaluate aspects of, and approaches to, religion and belief, including their significance, influence and study.</i>
5 (25-30 marks)	• Confident critical analysis and perceptive evaluation of the issue. • A response that successfully identifies and thoroughly addresses the issues raised by the question set. • The response shows an excellent standard of coherence, clarity and organisation. • Thorough, sustained and clear views are given, supported by extensive, detailed reasoning and/or evidence. • The views of scholars/schools of thought are used extensively, appropriately and in context. • Confident and perceptive analysis of the nature of connections between the various elements of the approaches studied (within and/or across themes where applicable). • Thorough and accurate use of specialist language and vocabulary in context. • Excellent spelling, punctuation and grammar.
4 (19-24 marks)	• Purposeful analysis and effective evaluation of the issue. • The main issues raised by the question are identified successfully and addressed. • The views given are clearly supported by detailed reasoning and/or evidence. • The response shows a very good standard of coherence, clarity and organisation. • Views of scholars/schools of thought are used appropriately and in context. • Purposeful analysis of the nature of connections between the various elements of the approaches studied (within and/or across themes where applicable). • Accurate use of specialist language and vocabulary in context. • Very good spelling, punctuation and grammar.
3 (13-18 marks)	• Satisfactory analysis and relevant evaluation of the issue. • Most of the issues raised by the question are identified successfully and have generally been addressed. • The response shows a satisfactory standard of coherence, clarity and organisation. • Most of the views given are satisfactorily supported by reasoning and/or evidence. • Views of scholars/schools of thought are generally used appropriately and in context. • Sensible analysis of the nature of connections between the various elements of the approaches studied (within and/or across themes where applicable). • Mainly accurate use of specialist language and vocabulary in context. • Satisfactory spelling, punctuation and grammar.
2 (7-12 marks)	• Some valid analysis and inconsistent evaluation of the issue. • A limited number of issues raised by the question set are identified and partially addressed. • Partially accurate response, with some signs of coherence, clarity and organisation. • A basic attempt to justify the views given, but they are only partially supported with reason and/or evidence. • Basic use of the views of scholars/schools of thought, appropriately and in context. • Makes some analysis of the nature of connections between the various elements of the approaches studied (within and/or across themes where applicable). • Some mainly accurate use of specialist language and vocabulary in context. • Some minor, recurring errors in spelling, punctuation and grammar.
1 (1-6 marks)	• A basic analysis and limited evaluation of the issue. • An attempt has been made to identify and address the issues raised by the question set. • Very limited accuracy within the response, with little coherence, clarity and organisation. • Little attempt to justify a view with reasoning or evidence. • Little or no use of the views of scholars/schools of thought. • Limited analysis of the nature of connections between the various elements of the approaches studied (within and/or across themes where applicable). • Some use of basic specialist language and vocabulary. • Errors in spelling, punctuation and grammar affect the meaning and clarity of communication.
0	• No relevant analysis or evaluation.

WJEC GCE A LEVEL RELIGIOUS STUDIES

OPTION B – A STUDY OF ISLAM

SUMMER 2025 MARK SCHEME

To be read in conjunction with the generic level descriptors provided.

Section A

1. **Examine ethical debate about punishment for crime, with reference to views within and outside Islamic tradition.**

[AO1 30]

Candidates could include some or of the following, but other relevant responses will be credited.

- **Ethical arguments** can refer to ideas about crime and what is a morally acceptable way to respond to it. This can involve categorisation of different types of offense, and consideration of ethical principles behind responses. These include practical considerations as well as concepts of retribution.
- In shari'a law, traditionally Muslim scholars have categorised **hudud** crimes, which go against God's laws; **qisas** crimes which harm other individuals and **tazir** crimes which are less specified and may be decided by a judge (qazi) according to the situation.
- The Qur'an encourages Muslims to accept repentance and offer compensation. Retribution is allowed, including the death penalty, for murder and the most serious crimes. However, forgiveness is rewarded.
- Apostacy, leaving Islam for another religion, is an area of controversy. Some have pointed out that there is 'no compulsion' in religion, according to the Qur'an; others that the death penalty was given to those who left the Muslim community to join enemy tribes. Cutting of the hand for theft is controversial today; some argue there are always reasons why such strict punishments should not be given in practice.
- An issue is how to integrate Islamic principles into the machinery of state, including modern situations which may be **secular**. Some call for the renewal of punishments as given in the tribal society at the time of Muhammad. They believe these are free from distortion and are closer to God's will.
- Others believe that God's law and **religious** judges should apply to religious matters and affairs of state are better managed separately, on humanitarian grounds. They might claim some support for this position from the Constitution of Madinah and the way things became separated under some historical Caliphates.
- The death penalty is a particular area of controversy. **Tariq Ramadan** argued for a review to be carried out and for it to be suspended, but fell short of call for its ban.
- **Barrister Naima Asif**, challenges the use of the death penalty, arguing that coerced confessions violate both international and shari'a law. She highlights that shari'a law allows the death penalty only under strict conditions, emphasizing justice, mercy, and repentance. The Quran prioritizes forgiveness, and the penalty was meant originally meant as a deterrent, and not intended for frequent use. She also points out that the death penalty disproportionately affects religious minorities in some Muslim countries and is often misused for political purpose.

- Traditionalist **Ash-Sharabasi** argued that it is appropriate for cases of murder because this is taking a life and it is a crime against the community. The punishment may practically deter damage to the society, in his view.
- Non-Islamic scholar **James Rachels** reviewed the philosophies of Kant, who accepted retribution, and Bentham, who suggested this only inflicted more suffering. He pointed out the utilitarian, practical purpose of punishment and the importance of rehabilitating the criminal.

This is not a checklist, please remember to credit any valid alternatives.

2. Examine the compatibility between Islamic teachings and scientific views about the origins of the universe.

[AO1 30]

Candidates could include some or all of the following, but other relevant responses will be credited.

- **Science** does not need religious or supernatural forces to explain phenomena. Observations are made which must be explained with rational deduction, evidence and scientific experiment to confirm the results. There is no need for a power like a God.
- **Islam** requires everything to be focused around belief in one creator God. All things in the current world are signs of the Creator. The power behind the universe is one and no other, and this power does not need to be rationally proved, it must be accepted and believed in.
- Regarding the origins of the universe, science proposes theories such as the **Big Bang**. This suggests spontaneous generation of forces; the coming together of a huge weight of mass which then exploded into the ever-expanding universe. The laws of physics can explain this rationally.
- Islam suggests that **God** was the supreme being, **first cause** and prime mover in the universe. Were it not for God being there before time itself, and starting the chain of events, there would have been no creation at all. This raises issues of compatibility, since the positions appear opposed.
- However, there are also areas of **compatibility**. The Qur'an refers to the universe having come together then split asunder, which some have interpreted to agree with the big bang theory. Muslims might also point out that scientists cannot go back in time to prove their theory, so there is an element of belief in the scientific position.
- Following on from the initial creation, **species evolved** from one to the next with natural selection and gradual change, according to the scientific theory of evolution. Many Muslims dispute this because of Qur'anic accounts of the origin of species according to God's creation, one day after the next. However, some Muslims have suggested this refers to stages of creation, rather than days, and that the two theories are compatible.
- **Logical deduction** and gathering of evidence in the cornerstone of science. Even though scientists cannot go back to the creation, they can observe and measure the rate of expansion in the universe and deduce backwards to the point of creation. This methodology of investigation is different from the Islamic position.
- Muslims follow the **Qur'anic revelation** as a position of faith. Nevertheless, some support this with observation and point out that many Muslims contributed to science and may have even founded scientific method in the Middle Ages. The extent of compatibility, then, might be more than first appears.

This is not a checklist, please remember to credit any valid alternatives.

Section B

3. 'Muslims in Britain have no difficulty assimilating into secular society.'

Evaluate this view.

[AO2 30]

Candidates could include some or all of the following, but other relevant points should be credited.

- **Assimilation** is the process whereby people of different cultural backgrounds or religions, often those who have migrated from other parts of the world, take on the culture and values of the host community.
- **Muslims in Britain** can trace origins to many countries, such as Pakistan, other South Asian countries, the Middle East and elsewhere. Many are second or third generation: people who are fully British nationals who have been born in the UK and have never lived elsewhere.
- Assimilation could mean many different things. In school or at work, for example, Muslims might assimilate by **taking part in social occasions**, parties and so on. This might create issues regarding dietary rules because Muslims eat halal meat and do not drink alcohol. Some would say that in diverse, inclusive Britain, different dietary options and freedom to choose diet are no barrier to attending such events. Others argue that there is risk of Muslims losing their cultural heritage or going astray, making assimilation difficult.
- Religious observances such as **prayer and Ramadan** might create issues. The Islamic practice of praying five times a day at set times might cut across school or work breaks. Muslims need a clean, quiet place to pray. Many places make this easy by providing prayer spaces. Fasting during Ramadan might be difficult when seeing others eat around during the day. Some see this as a test of faith and no barrier to assimilation.
- **Traditions of clothing** and dress might be an issue, particularly for women. The 'hijab' might be interpreted in different ways, ranging from a headscarf to a full-face veil, to simply an attitude of modesty regardless of clothing. The latter is no barrier to integration, but there are issues with the full-face veil particularly with others who feel uncomfortable towards it, or communication is required in a workplace.
- The **attitude of the host community** might vary: the experience of some Muslims is of comfortable acceptance, tolerance and encouragement. Others experience discrimination, which discourages them from assimilating.
- The **interpretations of Muslims** affect attitudes to assimilation. Some encourage interaction and see it as a duty to play a full part in the community, taking on important roles including political positions at the highest levels. Others discourage fully assimilating because they fear it might dilute Islamic faith and practice. The position taken inevitably affects whether people who follow such a position, or that of a scholar, are able to fully assimilate without difficulty.

Overall, candidates should engage with the debate and come to a substantiated evaluation regarding the issue raised.

4. 'Human interpretation impairs understanding of shari'a'

Evaluate this view.

[AO2 30]

Candidates could include some or all of the following, but other relevant points should be credited.

- **Shari'a is Islamic law or God's law.** It is considered rooted in the way God intended Muslims to live their lives. Since God created the world and everything in it, Muslims believe they should always consider God's will when undertaking any action.
- **Shari'a is based on the Qur'an,** the directly revealed word of God, which is the first source to go to when defining shari'a law, its rulings and allowances. Many Muslims argue that since God's words are infallible and cannot be questioned, human interpretation could detract from them, weaken them and possibly introduce misinterpretation. Humans might be distracted by worldly matters and want to make life easier, to impair shari'a by introducing rulings to suggest that missing out aspects of Islam would be permissible.
- Over the centuries and especially today, there are **thousands of different Islamic scholars** who make opinions called fatwahs. They do not all agree and often produce differing interpretations, sometimes with different emphases and sometimes different conclusions. This can be a source of confusion for modern Muslims who find the ideal of shari'a less clear as a result.
- However, there are many **modern day issues** which are not clearly answered by the Qur'an or by other sources of shari'a such as the Hadith. Smoking tobacco, limits on abortion and genetic engineering for medical purposes are new issues which Muslims want answered. It could be argued that scholarly human interpretation helps and clarifies shari'a because it provides clear guidance for Muslims today from people who have studied and have in depth knowledge of the original sources, so are well qualified to guide.
- In the early days of Islam, **Muslims looked to the companions** of the Prophet to explain what Muhammad meant when he did certain acts of Sunnah. After his death, the wisdom of the companions was much sought after, but not regarded specifically as part of the shari'a itself. Therefore, the companions might be considered part of human interpretation and evidence that human interpretation is helpful and does not impair understanding of shari'a.
- It might be argued that it **depends on what issue**. Some scholars argue that if an issue is clear in Qur'an and in the examples of Muhammad, then it cannot be changed and further interpretation is not required. But if it is unclear, then personal opinion or ijtihad is perfectly legitimate. There are different opinions on this.

Overall, candidates should engage with the debate and come to a substantiated evaluation regarding the issue raised.

5. 'Representation of Islam in Britain today is fair.'

Evaluate this view.

[AO2 30]

Candidates could include some or all of the following, but other relevant points should be credited.

- **Representation** refers to how the media, prominent Muslims in public life, as well as Muslim organisations and non-Muslim commentators give an impression of Islam. It may refer to Islam and Muslims in the news, the arts, documentaries, politics and other spheres.
- **Muslims have been successful and taken prominent positions.** Politicians such as Sadiq Khan took the role of Mayor of London. Journalists such as Faisal Islam have risen to national prominence. Sporting professional such as Mo Farrar show that Muslims are proud of Britain and contribute to the good of the country.
- **However, there have also been preachers who promoted separatism.** There have been cases of forced marriage and abuse of women, and other criminal actions involving Muslims. These have been reported by the media, who say they are only exposing the truth, whereas some say they unfairly stir negative views.
- **A positive image of Islam** is presented in the arts and documentaries by programmes such as those about art and the contribution of Islam, as well as many others in mainstream media. It could be argued that some mainstream broadcasters go out of their way to include Muslims in all kinds of programmes, even talent shows and entertainment programmes, to give a positive and inclusive message.
- However, **some claim that the press has given a negative image of Islam** specifically about Muslims and terrorism. When atrocities have happened, they feel it has not always been made clear that the vast majority of Muslims also condemn terrorism and that the terrorists do not speak for Muslims. Others say that the media has a duty to report what happens and that if some extremists claim to represent Islam, they will report that.
- The **Muslim Council of Britain** claim to be the largest umbrella body representing different groups of Muslims in the UK. They put forward perspectives to government and the needs of Muslims on matters such as opposing discrimination. However, they have been criticised as not being an elected body as such, and therefore only representative of some Muslims.
- An issue to consider in the representation of Islam is that there are **many different opinions held by different Muslims**. Conservative Muslims might promote traditional adherence to religious rituals, dress codes and so on. Modernists might promote a different image of Islam, with Muslims fitting in with the habits of mainstream society. The challenge is to recognise the diversity of views in the representation of Islam in Britain today.

Overall, candidates should engage with the debate and come to a substantiated evaluation regarding the issue raised.

6. 'There is a clear approach to conversion in Islam.'

Evaluate this view.

[AO2 30]

Candidates could include some or all of the following, but other relevant points should be credited.

- Candidates may begin by explaining what conversion in Islam involves: reciting the statement of faith, the shahadah, in front of two witnesses and believing it in the heart. Conversion is considered a reversion to the natural state of being, since it is believed that God made all children in the natural state of Islam. It could therefore be argued that in Islam there is a completely clear approach to conversion.
- In terms of the significance of conversion, Muslims believe that their faith is the true message and is the way to salvation in heaven. However, some Muslim scholars such as Al-Ghazali concluded that everyone, including people of other faiths, go to heaven. Only those who heard and understood Islam, but then rejected it, end up in hell. Christian and Jews are referred to as fellow believers. Other Muslims disagree and say that only Muslims who profess faith can achieve eternal life after the Day of Judgement. Therefore, the theology of conversion may not be totally clear within Islam.
- There are records where forced conversions happened, on occasion, in spite of the Islamic teachings on the need for those converting to have correct intent and so this could question whether there is coherence in practice. For example, Caliph Al-Hakim forced people in his kingdom to adopt Islam; however, in contrast the Mughal emperor Akbar recognised that some Hindus had been forcibly converted and permitted them to return to Hinduism. However, this indicates that although the Islamic approach to conversion was clear in theory, in practice matters were not always ideal.
- Candidates may argue that conversion and taking on aspects of Islam do not automatically go together and give examples. This could be used to demonstrate that the approach by some to conversion is not clear.
- Candidates may also point out that there are a variety of reasons for conversion to Islam and therefore no clear approach. For example, in the West, some people convert for marriage, some for reasons of theology and some as a change of lifestyle.
- Candidates may also argue that conversion is thought of as non-Muslims becoming Muslims, but sometimes Muslims convert from one sect to another. Usually this does not require any conversion ceremony, but the differences of belief held by different sects may be considerable

Overall, candidates should engage with the debate and come to a substantiated evaluation regarding the issue raised.