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# **GCE AS MARKING SCHEME**

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**SUMMER 2025**

**RELIGIOUS STUDIES - UNIT 1  
OPTION B: AN INTRODUCTION TO ISLAM**

**2120UB0-1**

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## 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.

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## **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.

## AS Generic Band Descriptors

| Band     | <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Assessment Objective AO1 – Part (a) questions 15 marks</b></p> <p><i>Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of religion and belief, including:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>religious, philosophical and/or ethical thought and teaching</i></li> <li>- <i>influence of beliefs, teachings and practices on individuals, communities and societies</i></li> <li>- <i>cause and significance of similarities and differences in belief, teaching and practice</i></li> <li>- <i>approaches to the study of religion and belief.</i></li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
|----------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>5</b> | <p style="text-align: center;"><b>13-15 marks</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Thorough, accurate and relevant knowledge and understanding of religion and belief.</li> <li>• An extensive and relevant response which answers the specific demands of the question set.</li> <li>• The response shows an excellent standard of coherence, clarity and organisation.</li> <li>• The response demonstrates extensive depth and/or breadth. Excellent use of evidence and examples.</li> <li>• Thorough and accurate reference made to sacred texts and sources of wisdom, where appropriate.</li> <li>• Thorough and accurate use of specialist language /vocabulary in context.</li> <li>• Excellent spelling, punctuation and grammar.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                          |
| <b>4</b> | <p style="text-align: center;"><b>10-12 marks</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Accurate and relevant knowledge and understanding of religion and belief.</li> <li>• A detailed, relevant response which answers the specific demands of the question set.</li> <li>• The response shows a very good standard of coherence, clarity and organisation.</li> <li>• The response demonstrates depth and/or breadth. Good use of evidence and examples.</li> <li>• Accurate reference made to sacred texts and sources of wisdom, where appropriate.</li> <li>• Accurate use of specialist language and vocabulary in context.</li> <li>• Very good spelling, punctuation and grammar.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| <b>3</b> | <p style="text-align: center;"><b>7-9 marks</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mainly accurate and relevant knowledge and understanding of religion and belief.</li> <li>• A satisfactory response, which generally answers the main demands of the question set.</li> <li>• The response shows a satisfactory standard of coherence, clarity and organisation.</li> <li>• The response demonstrates depth and/or breadth in some areas. Satisfactory use of evidence and examples.</li> <li>• Mainly accurate reference made to sacred texts and sources of wisdom, where appropriate.</li> <li>• Mainly accurate use of specialist language and vocabulary in context.</li> <li>• Satisfactory spelling, punctuation and grammar.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                |
| <b>2</b> | <p style="text-align: center;"><b>4-6 marks</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Limited knowledge and understanding of religion and belief. Basic level of accuracy and relevance.</li> <li>• A basic response, addressing some of the demands of the question set.</li> <li>• Partially accurate response, with some signs of coherence, clarity and organisation.</li> <li>• The response demonstrates limited depth and/or breadth, including limited use of evidence and examples.</li> <li>• Some accurate reference made to sacred texts and sources of wisdom, where appropriate.</li> <li>• Some accurate use of specialist language and vocabulary in context.</li> <li>• Some minor, recurring errors in spelling, punctuation and grammar.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                               |
| <b>1</b> | <p style="text-align: center;"><b>1-3 marks</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Very limited knowledge and understanding of religion and belief. Low level of accuracy and relevance.</li> <li>• A very limited response, with little attempt to address the question.</li> <li>• Very limited accuracy within the response, with little coherence, clarity and organisation.</li> <li>• The response demonstrates very limited depth and/or breadth. Very limited use of evidence and examples.</li> <li>• Little or no reference made to sacred texts and sources of wisdom, where appropriate.</li> <li>• Some grasp of basic specialist language and vocabulary</li> <li>• Errors in spelling, punctuation and grammar affect the meaning and clarity of communication.</li> </ul> <p><b>N.B. A maximum of 1 mark should be awarded for a response that only demonstrates 'knowledge in isolation'</b></p> |
| <b>0</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No relevant information.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |

| <b>Band</b> | <b>Assessment Objective AO2- Part (b) questions 15 marks</b><br><i>Analyse and evaluate aspects of, and approaches to, religion and belief, including their significance, influence and study.</i>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
|-------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>5</b>    | <p style="text-align: center;"><b>13-15 marks</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Confident critical analysis and perceptive evaluation of the issue.</li> <li>• A response that successfully identifies and thoroughly addresses the issues raised by the question set.</li> <li>• The response shows an excellent standard of coherence, clarity and organisation.</li> <li>• Thorough, sustained and clear views are given, supported by extensive, detailed reasoning and/or evidence.</li> <li>• Thorough and accurate use of specialist language and vocabulary in context.</li> <li>• Excellent spelling, punctuation and grammar.</li> </ul>     |
| <b>4</b>    | <p style="text-align: center;"><b>10-12 marks</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Purposeful analysis and effective evaluation of the issue.</li> <li>• The main issues raised by the question are identified successfully and addressed.</li> <li>• The response shows a very good standard of coherence, clarity and organisation.</li> <li>• The views given are clearly supported by detailed reasoning and/or evidence.</li> <li>• Accurate use of specialist language and vocabulary in context.</li> <li>• Very good spelling, punctuation and grammar.</li> </ul>                                                                                |
| <b>3</b>    | <p style="text-align: center;"><b>7-9 marks</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Satisfactory analysis and relevant evaluation of the issue.</li> <li>• Most of the issues raised by the question are identified successfully and have generally been addressed.</li> <li>• The response shows a satisfactory standard of coherence, clarity and organisation.</li> <li>• Most of the views given are satisfactorily supported by reasoning and/or evidence.</li> <li>• Mainly accurate use of specialist language and vocabulary in context.</li> <li>• Satisfactory spelling, punctuation and grammar.</li> </ul>                                       |
| <b>2</b>    | <p style="text-align: center;"><b>4-6 marks</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Some valid analysis and inconsistent evaluation of the issue.</li> <li>• A limited number of issues raised by the question set are identified and partially addressed.</li> <li>• Partially accurate response, with some signs of coherence, clarity and organisation.</li> <li>• A basic attempt to justify the views given, but they are only partially supported with reason and/or evidence.</li> <li>• Some accurate use of specialist language and vocabulary in context.</li> <li>• Some minor, recurring errors in spelling, punctuation and grammar.</li> </ul> |
| <b>1</b>    | <p style="text-align: center;"><b>1-3 marks</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A basic analysis and limited evaluation of the issue.</li> <li>• Very limited accuracy within the response, with little coherence, clarity and organisation.</li> <li>• An attempt has been made to identify and address the issues raised by the question set.</li> <li>• Little attempt to justify a view with reasoning or evidence.</li> <li>• Some grasp of basic specialist language and vocabulary.</li> <li>• Errors in spelling, punctuation and grammar affect the meaning and clarity of communication.</li> </ul>                                            |
| <b>0</b>    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No relevant analysis or evaluation.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |

**GCE AS RELIGIOUS STUDIES – UNIT 1**  
**OPTION B: AN INTRODUCTION TO ISLAM**  
**SUMMER 2025 MARK SCHEME**

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

**Section A**

**1. (a) Explain the role and importance of Jummah prayers for the Ummah. [15]**

**Candidates could include some of the following, but other relevant responses should be credited.**

- Jummah prayers take place in congregation on a Friday, replacing the daily mid-day zuhr prayer. Islamic traditions from the time of the prophet Muhammad define that they must take place in a group and cannot be prayed individually. There are different interpretations about the size of group required, but generally larger gatherings are preferred.
- The Ummah is the Islamic community of sense of brotherhood, felt by all Muslims around the world. All are considered part of the same world-wide family, brothers and sisters together, able to unite in prayer and gain strength focused on the worship of the one God in unison.
- Jummah therefore draws together prayer and community. Whilst all other prayers can be done individually or in a group, Jummah is a group affair. There are many features of Jummah which help to strengthen the sense of community for Muslims. As in other prayers, Muslims stand shoulder to shoulder together facing the Ka'aba in Makkah, but in a larger congregation in Jummah. In practice this may mean seeing a wider variety of Muslims, including those who have to work at other times but arrange to attend to Jummah prayers which they see as a congregation.
- A sermon or Khutbah is given by an Imam, reminding Muslims of their duties and explaining aspects of Islamic belief and practice. This helps to unite the Ummah around common beliefs, explain aspects of doctrine and encourage Muslims in their faith and practice.
- At the end of prayers, the Imam leads du'a prayers which mention the names of Muslims in the community who are ill or in need, and of Muslims around the world who may be suffering and asked to be remembered in the prayers. This helps bring to mind the needs of others in the minds of the worshippers, drawing together the Ummah.
- Jummah prayers are an important focus for charity. During the occasion, collections are taken for the upkeep of the mosque and for other charitable causes or campaigns at the time. As well as practical support, this may help to build empathy for those suffering and draw together the minds of the collective Ummah.
- In countries such as the UK, Jummah can help to unite Muslims from different ethnic origins and strengthen them where they live as minority communities, helping to strengthen their commitment to Islam and keep them firm in the faith as part of the worldwide Islamic Ummah.

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

- (b) **‘Jummah prayers are the most important of all prayers for Muslims.’  
Evaluate this view.** [15]

**Candidates could include some of the following, but other relevant responses should be credited.**

- There are many different types of prayers in Islam. These include the five daily prayers, Jummah prayers, sunna and nafila prayers, personal du’a prayers, funeral prayers and prayers for guidance.
- Traditionally, Muslims closed their shops and businesses in Madinah and went to the mosque; in some places Muslims still do this. Prophet Muhammad left his example, the sunna, that Muslims should attend Jummah and it was a key feature in setting up Islamic practice in the Madinah community.
- The Qur’an 62.9 commands Muslims to respond to the Call to Prayer for Jummah and hasten to the prayers. As the word of God directly revealed to Muslims, this could be used to support the argument that Jummah is the most important prayer.
- It could be argued that Jummah prayers are the most important, because they are considered an obligation and the only prayers which must be read in congregation. Islamic scholars have ruled that other daily prayers may be read in groups and this is preferred, but not essential, but Jummah must be read as a congregational prayer.
- Jummah formally includes Islamic teaching, from the sermon, so could be seen as the most important prayer for imparting teachings and learning about Islam.
- However, the Five Pillars of Islam refer to the five daily prayers, rather than Jummah prayer, so it could be seen as more important to establish this daily practice. Furthermore, Muslims might find daily prayers more effective in developing a sense of God-consciousness wherever they are, at every moment in their life, throughout the day.
- Muslims are given leave to pray the daily zuhr midday prayer when they are not able to pray Jummah, according to scholars, suggesting that the obligation to pray is more important than which prayer it is.
- There are issues about whether women should attend Jummah prayers and whether it is necessary when living in a non-Muslim country or travelling. This suggests that Jummah may not be the most important prayer for all Muslims, all of the time or in all situations.
- It could be argued that whilst Muslims gain strength from Jummah, faith is ultimately personal so a Muslim might feel closest to God whilst making personal du’a prayers and heart felt requests for God to help them with their individual worries and needs. These can include prayers at specific times such as on the Night of Power, and times when a Muslim is considering making a choice of marital partner or career. Specific prayers at these times might have a major influence over a Muslim’s life and so be seen as most important.

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

**2. (a) Outline ways in which the five categories of action exemplify key moral principles for Muslims. [15]**

**Candidates could include some of the following, but other relevant responses should be credited.**

- The five categories of action in Islam are defined by Islamic scholars using shari'a, Islamic law. They are based on the guidance found in the Qur'an and sunna, examples of Muhammad.
- The Qur'an as the directly revealed word of God cannot be questioned and should be followed by Muslims. Any clear command from the Qur'an is incorporated into the five categories. This reflects the emphasis on God underlying all moral principles in Islam. Everything is God-centered and requires obedience to the will of God.
- Muhammad was the final prophet who left a perfect example for Muslims to follow. His actions are a guiding moral principle which Muslims aim to follow because they show how to put the Qur'an into action.
- The five categories are: wajib / fard (obligatory), mustahab (preferred, commendable), halal / mubah (permissible), makruh (discouraged, reprehensible), haram (absolutely forbidden). These five divisions reflect the Islamic principles that shari'a is not supposed to be burdensome; rather it is a guide or way to follow a morally upright life.
- Examples of the five categories include that it is wajib/ fard (obligatory) to pray, showing the importance of making a Muslim life centered around obedience to God five times a day. Drinking alcohol is haram (forbidden), following commands in the Qur'an and the teachings of Muhammad, to avoid immorality and distraction from prayers. Several modern ethical debates, including some aspects of fertility treatment and abortion, are left within the middle categories where Muslims have some freedom to make individual decisions.
- Not all issues are clearly resolved by Islamic sources. Where there are gaps, scholars have tried to make interpretations but the five categories also allow for individuals to make decisions, particularly for permissible actions which are neither required nor forbidden.
- The intentions behind actions are seen as more important than the actions themselves. Therefore, if a Muslim does something with the intention to please God, they may receive reward in the afterlife, even if that action turns out to be mistaken in a worldly existence. If a Muslim performs the routine of prayer, but does not make their intention to please God, then the requirements for an obligatory action are not fulfilled.
- The five categories provide a system of behaviour for Muslim communities as well as individuals, and both are seen as important. Adab, or etiquette, is expected according to the five categories to enable communities to get on cohesively and provide moral principles for them to abide by.
- At an individual level, Muslims may feel reassured because the five categories provide a framework of surety in place of doubt, to avoid worrying about doing the right thing. Muslims may gain reward in the afterlife for living in the current world according to these principles.

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

- (b) **'The five categories are, in practice, a recipe for confusion.'**  
**Evaluate this view.**

**[15]**

**Candidates could include some of the following, but other relevant responses should be credited.**

- It might be argued that the very creation of the five categories, by Islamic scholars, is a recognition that there are many confusing issues facing Muslims which are not clearly defined in the Qur'an and sunna. The definition of five categories was an attempt to help Muslims and provide clarity for them in their everyday lives.
- The five categories make clear which aspects of faith are obligatory, such as the five daily prayers, and which are additional, such as nafilah prayers. This makes them a source of clarity rather than confusion.
- Where used well, it could be argued the categories help avoid confusion and provide a reference guide for Muslims, giving them a clear framework for both personal decisions and for interactions in communities.
- The categories are based on the word of God, the Qur'an, and the example of Muhammad, the sunna, so it could be argued these should be obeyed and followed without questioning or confusion. Some Muslims would argue simply to leave aside issues of doubt and confusion and focus only on the clear issues, using caution as a principle, and see the categories are providing sufficient for this, even if they are not completely comprehensive.
- The five categories arose from situations in seventh century Arabia and the historical situation in which the early leaders of Islam, the Caliphs, and the first Islamic law schools operated. These were very different from today, so it could be argued that it is confusing at the very least to transplant a moral system from one time in history to over a thousand years later in very different circumstances.
- Many issues which face Muslims nowadays are debated, making the categories a possible source of confusion. These include aspects of medical ethics, abortion, fertility treatment, possibly smoking, uses of some modern technology and so on.
- Different scholars as well as different sectarian traditions within Islam have come up with varying interpretations, making it confusing particularly for young Muslims to adopt a position. These range from those who might define all fertility treatment as forbidden to those who might take a modernist stance on some issues and accept homosexuality.
- The importance of intention behind action provides a further aspect to the debate. It could be argued that it does not matter if the categories are not all clear, it is the intention which counts. On the other hand, that might mean some think a broader range of interpretation is acceptable, so long as the intention is good, creating divisions amongst the Ummah.

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

## Section B

3. (a) Explain why Shi'a Muslims celebrate Ashura. [15]

**Candidates could include some of the following, but other relevant responses should be credited.**

- After the death of Muhammad, a succession of four Caliphs led the Muslim community. Divisions arose and a dispute occurred about who should continue this leadership. One group was descended from Ali, who later became known as the Shi'a; whereas the others formed the Sunni Muslims. At the time those divisions were not so clear, but the marking of Ashura has since become distinct between the different groups.
- Ashura is a special occasion marked by Shi'a Muslims for the death of Husayn, son of Ali and Muhammad's grandson. Husayn and his family were killed at this time when they refused to surrender to the opposing group of Muslims led by Yazid.
- Husayn and his family were outnumbered and surrounded at Karbala but did not give in despite the hopeless situation. They did not even have water to drink. Their opponents cruelly killed Husayn and his group who became regarded as martyrs.
- Ashura is a time of mourning, when black is often worn and black clothes used as flags or covers. This symbolizes the sense of loss which Shi'a Muslims feel as the death of leader Husayn and all that he stood for.
- As a martyr, Husayn stood firm to his beliefs, and for his cause which was considered a righteous rather than personal cause. Shi'a Muslims mark this time for all righteous causes in principle: that they should stand up for the right and the true regardless of how great the opposition.
- Processions are held in which Shi'a Muslims may symbolically or actually self-flagellate, sometimes even drawing blood. This is done to recall the bloodshed at Karbala and to show commitment to the causes which is considered worth more than the physical pain suffered by taking part in such rituals. There are a variety of opinions on this and not all involve actual pain.
- Ta'ziyah dramas are enacted to remember the events of Karbala. These are done not only to remind their audiences of the events but also to create a sense of empathy and draw them closer emotionally to the tragedy of Karbala, so that it becomes a heart-felt focus for Shi'a Muslims and an important point in the annual calendar to remember.
- Husayn said that he forgave his enemies, despite what they were doing to him. He was a deeply spiritual character, a grandson of Muhammad and emotionally very close to him. His spiritual qualities and forgiveness are also marked at this time and Shi'a Muslims may think of the coming Akhirah and gaining forgiveness in the afterlife.

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

- (b) **‘Ashura is a clear representation of Shi’a identity.’**  
**Evaluate this view.**

**[15]**

**Candidates could include some of the following, but other relevant responses should be credited.**

- Shi’a Muslims form a sect within Islam, comprising an estimated 10 to 20% of the Muslim world population. Ashura is the marking of the martyrdom of Husayn considered an important event by Shi’a Muslims.
- In daily life, Shi’a Muslims pray almost identically to Sunni Muslims. They pay zakat, attend the Hajj pilgrimage and follow rituals for birth and death in just the same way as other Muslims. To the non-Muslim, it would be very difficult to tell the difference. It might be argued that Ashura is a particular, distinguishing feature of Shi’a Islam but, in terms of overall identity, daily prayer and ritual might be much clearer. In emphasizing Ashura as a difference, this might misrepresent the overall similarity of Sunni and Shi’a Muslims and the closeness of their identities.
- However, Ashura is well known for the processions and acts which might be described as self-harm, flagellation or symbols of it. There is nothing quite similar in Sunni Islam, some of whose leaders do not agree with these practices. The events behind them are also distinct. The scholar David Waines argued that ‘since al-Husayn’s martyrdom was believed to have been divinely ordained, Karbala became a symbol of Allah’s mercy and justice’, and that symbol is particular to this occasion.
- This makes Ashura well known and identifiable and something which could therefore be regarded as a clear manifestation of Shi’a identity.
- Nevertheless, the focus on self-harm might be considered a misrepresentation of Shi’a identity, and a more positive aspect of it is to stand up for righteous causes. Furthermore, forgiveness is a key part of Muslim teaching which is also part of the story behind Ashura, which does not always become highlighted from the observance of this occasion.
- There are many other distinctive aspects of Shi’a Islam, such as the emphasis of the line of Twelve Imams and the position of the Imam as guide without error who others could meet and hear more about the sect from. Meeting an Imam and listening to their talks might be a clearer way to see Shi’a identity.
- It is easy to oversimplify and consider all Shi’a Muslims as one, whereas in reality there are different groupings and rituals. All might mark Ashura as important but it would not be accurate to say there is a single way of representing it. Some use flagellation and others not; some perform ta’ziyah dramas whereas others frown on re-enactments. This suggests there is no single way to mark Ashura to show Shi’a identity.

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

4. (a) **Examine the use of the Qur'an as a guide for humanity.** [15]

**Candidates could include some of the following, but other relevant responses should be credited.**

- The Qur'an is the final revelation of God to humanity given to Prophet Muhammad in seventh century Arabia, according to Muslim belief. It is still regarded as the unchanged word of God for Muslims and used in many different ways as a text for religious worship, for beautification and decoration, oral recitation, and especially as a source of moral guidance.
- The Qur'an refers to many moral teachings. Muslims should have concern for the poor; look after orphans and not take their rightful belongings or inheritance; pay poor due in the form of zakat; rule over people justly and carry out transactions fairly without cheating.
- These moral directions are given in outline; more detail is found by the examples of Muhammad through his sunna, which is then interpreted further by Islamic scholars to make sense of teachings and rulings for the present day. The formation of moral guidance is based on the principles laid down by the Qur'an and never in contradiction with any detail within it. In the case of zakat, for example, Muhammad explained in more detail who should give receive zakat and further explained it's importance in forging equality amongst the Muslim community.
- In the formation of moral teachings, God is always central and God's word, the Qur'an, is seen as foremost as a guide for Muslims. Moral guidance is given through shari'a, referred to as Islamic law or more generally as 'the way' to lead a righteous life according to God's command. The Qur'an is central to forming this moral guidance through shari'a.
- The Qur'an as a revelation from God was revealed from around 610 to 623CE. During this period Muslims faced enemies and made peace with others; the Madinah community of Muslims living alongside Christians and Jews was formed. The Qur'an gave moral guidance for these different situations including advising Muslims to make peace and protect others in Madinah. The length of revelations over an extended period of time enabled God to give moral guidance to humanity in many different circumstances.
- Muslims believe God sent many revelations to humanity, but their essence was the same and the moral guidance within them in agreement. However, the Qur'an is the last and complete message, correcting distortions in earlier revelations and providing moral guidance for communities who forgot these revelations and went astray. The Qur'an is also thought of as complete and containing all that is needed to guide humanity.

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

- (b) **'The Qur'an has become less relevant for Muslims.'**  
**Evaluate this view.**

**[15]**

**Candidates could include some of the following, but other relevant responses should be credited.**

- The Qur'an is considered the final, complete revelation from God to Muslims. Earlier revelations were distorted, or forgotten, or were incomplete. Nothing is accepted as a revelation after the Qur'an. Therefore, it could be argued that changing times are not a factor to be considered by Muslims: the Qur'an's relevance is eternal.
- Indeed, the Qur'an is thought of in essence as being created by God and kept with God in heaven. It is considered relevant for the teachings of belief in one God as well as matters of moral guidance such as care for those who are not well off. These are timeless aspects which can be applied to any society through the ages, no matter how much other things change.
- In practice, Muslims still say their daily prayers, five times a day, whilst reading passages from the original, Arabic Qur'an. When making personal prayers, they may also read parts of the Qur'an. When thinking of what to do in difficult situations or how to gain guidance for their future, especially when concerned about a matter, Muslims often read the Qur'an. Even if they do not understand the text, it is considered sacred and beneficial for Muslims to recite to bring calmness and blessings on their situations today.
- Nevertheless, the Qur'an was revealed in early seventh century tribal Arabia. The world has changed enormously since, both in technology as well as socially. Today, Muslims are looking for moral guidance about how far they can engage with new technologies such as genetic engineering for medical purposes. Living in multi-faith societies as Muslim minorities in the west has also thrown up many new issues.
- It could be argued, then, that the Qur'an is much less relevant today because it does not give answers to these modern, pressing problems. Many modern Muslims are therefore turning to Islamic scholars, to the internet, and to their own personal judgements to make sense of the world and come to decisions they are comfortable with.
- However, those might still be rooted in the Qur'an. Whilst scholars today might give new rulings and guidance, their first source to find them is the Qur'an and even if they have to make new guidance where it is lacking, general principles are drawn from the holy text. The pervading presence of God and the need to follow God's will in the world is reflected through Islamic teachings in every age and these originate from the Qur'an.

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

5. (a) **Explain the roles of rasul (messenger) and nadir (warner) by referring to previous prophets who came before Muhammad.** [15]

**Candidates could include some of the following, but other relevant responses should be credited.**

- Muslims are taught that there was a series of thousands of prophets, beginning with Adam and ending with Muhammad. Each came to a different community in their own time, to communicate the belief in one God in different ways.
- The role of rasul (messenger) was carried out by some of these prophets. Before Muhammad, Ibrahim (Abraham) brought the scrolls, Dawud (David) the zaboor or Psalms, Musa (Moses) the tawrah and Isa (Jesus) the Injeel or Gospels.
- In each case, the prophet was a messenger and not an author of the message they delivered. The words they received were delivered, usually through angel Jibril, and sometimes through dreams or in miraculous circumstances. These circumstances add to the proof, in the minds of Muslims, that the messages were revelations and the prophets themselves were had no particular divine status.
- An example is Musa. Musa led his people to Mount Tur (Mount Sinai) where he left them and went into the wilderness to fast for thirty days. Musa prostrated to God and was given the Ten Commandments. Meanwhile, his people started worshipping a Golden Calf. On his return, Musa warned them and destroyed the calf, which had become an idol.
- The role of nadir (warner) was also carried out by many of the rasuls (messengers) as well as by other prophets who did not deliver holy books. Warners told people first and foremost to give up the worship of idols and turn to the worship of the one true God. They also reminded people to lead morally upright lives. Time and again people forgot or turned away and received signs or punishments from God as a result.
- Musa warned Pharoah and the Egyptians away from their oppressive practices and from idolatry. God supported Musa against the strength of Pharoah and his magicians and showed that God's power was stronger by opening the sea and allowing Musa and his people to escape, whereas Pharoah and his army drowned.
- A constant theme was the warning of the people in Makkah not to bring idols into the Ka'aba and to clear the holy area of all statues and images. This happened at the time of Ibrahim and again at the time of Muhammad, because people were said to have forgotten the warnings of the past and distorted the revelations they were given.

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

(b) **‘Muhammad was more successful as a messenger than he was as a warner.’**

**Evaluate this view.**

**[15]**

- Muhammad had several roles, including delivering the final message of God, the Qur'an, and warning the people against idolatry and immorality. His embrace of the fullness of his roles makes him the last and, in the eyes of many, the ideal prophet.
- As messenger, Muhammad accepted the final revelation from God. He did not write it himself. He then took this message and taught it to others. Khadijah, his wife, and her cousin Waraqh, a Christian, accepted it, suggesting Muhammad succeeded in convincing others to the message.
- Revelations continued over many years and in Madinah, they formed the basis of how to live as a Muslim community, and how to deal with enemies when situations arose. Muhammad successfully led the people in many different ways, suggesting he interpreted and preached the message in an ideal way which ensured the success of Islam and development for the future.
- The statement suggests Muhammad was less than ideal in the role of warner. He told the Makkans to leave the worship of idols. But they mocked him and did not listen to his message. When he increased his warning, they retaliated by persecuting the Muslims and expelling them from Makkah into a barren valley.
- This suggests that Muhammad's tactics were counterproductive. Perhaps the Makkans feared losing the trade in people coming to the Ka'aba and making offerings. It could be argued that Muhammad would have been more effective if he had been more persuasive and come up with alternative sources of income for the Makkans.
- The Muslims suffered torture and were unable to pray openly. There was a danger that Islam might not have survived; its future was in question. In the end, the Muslims had to leave for Madinah. Had Muhammad been ideal perhaps his warnings would have been heeded and the Muslim community might not have had to suffer as they did.
- Initially in Madinah, people of different backgrounds got along well. However, some became traitors or hypocrites and entered secret alliances with idol worshipping tribes who were also enemies of the Muslims. This also suggests that Muhammad might not have been ideal in the delivery of his warnings at this point.
- It was a huge change that was required of the Makkans and this was bound to take considerable time to happen. Furthermore, Muhammad was incredibly brave in his preaching, going against most of his family and elders.
- Against all of this, it might be argued that everything was God's plan and there was a reason for all of it. Muhammad did not do things because he personally felt like it: he continually asked for God's guidance about what to do. His preaching of warning was following God's instructions and was an acceptance of God's will. God's will cannot be considered as anything other than ideal for Muslims.

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