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# **GCE A LEVEL MARKING SCHEME**

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**SUMMER 2025**

**A LEVEL  
RELIGIOUS STUDIES - COMPONENT 1  
OPTION B: A STUDY OF ISLAM**

**A120UB0-1**

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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. Examiners should not seek to mark candidates down as a result of small omissions in minor areas of an answer.

## **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     | <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Assessment Objective AO1 – Part (a) questions 20 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>17-20 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 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>• Insightful connections are made between the various approaches studied.</li> <li>• An extensive range of views of scholars/schools of thought used accurately and effectively.</li> <li>• Thorough and accurate use of specialist language and vocabulary in context.</li> </ul>                                                          |
| <b>4</b> | <p style="text-align: center;"><b>13-16 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 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>• Purposeful connections are made between the various approaches studied.</li> <li>• A range of scholarly views/schools of thought used largely accurately and effectively.</li> <li>• Accurate use of specialist language and vocabulary in context.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                       |
| <b>3</b> | <p style="text-align: center;"><b>9-12 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 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>• Sensible connections made between the various approaches studied.</li> <li>• A basic range of scholarly views/schools of thought used.</li> <li>• Mainly accurate use of specialist language and vocabulary in context.</li> </ul>                                                                                                               |
| <b>2</b> | <p style="text-align: center;"><b>5-8 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>• 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>• Makes some basic connections between the various approaches studied.</li> <li>• A limited range of scholarly views/schools of thought used.</li> <li>• Some accurate use of specialist language and vocabulary in context.</li> </ul>                                                                                                               |
| <b>1</b> | <p style="text-align: center;"><b>1-4 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>• 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>• Little or no use of scholarly views/schools of thought.</li> <li>• Very few or no connections made between the various approaches studied.</li> <li>• Some grasp of basic specialist language and vocabulary.</li> </ul> <p><b>N.B. A maximum of 2 marks 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>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |

| Band | <b>Assessment Objective AO2- Part (b) questions</b> 30 marks<br><i>Analyse and evaluate aspects of, and approaches to, religion and belief, including their significance, influence and study.</i>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
|------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 5    | <p style="text-align: center;"><b>25-30 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>• Thorough, sustained and clear views are given, supported by extensive, detailed reasoning and/or evidence.</li> <li>• The views of scholars/schools of thought are used extensively, appropriately and in context.</li> <li>• Confident and perceptive analysis of the nature of connections between the various elements of the approaches studied.</li> <li>• Thorough and accurate use of specialist language and vocabulary in context.</li> </ul> |
| 4    | <p style="text-align: center;"><b>19-24 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 views given are clearly supported by detailed reasoning and/or evidence.</li> <li>• Views of scholars/schools of thought are used appropriately and in context.</li> <li>• Purposeful analysis of the nature of connections between the various elements of the approaches studied.</li> <li>• Accurate use of specialist language and vocabulary in context.</li> </ul>                                                                                                          |
| 3    | <p style="text-align: center;"><b>13-18 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>• Most of the views given are satisfactorily supported by reasoning and/or evidence.</li> <li>• Views of scholars/schools of thought are generally used appropriately and in context.</li> <li>• Sensible analysis of the nature of connections between the various elements of the approaches studied.</li> <li>• Mainly accurate use of specialist language and vocabulary in context.</li> </ul>                                                             |
| 2    | <p style="text-align: center;"><b>7-12 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>• A basic attempt to justify the views given, but they are only partially supported with reason and/or evidence.</li> <li>• Basic use of the views of scholars/schools of thought appropriately and in context.</li> <li>• Makes some analysis of the nature of connections between the various elements of the approaches studied.</li> <li>• Some accurate use of specialist language and vocabulary in context.</li> </ul>                                             |
| 1    | <p style="text-align: center;"><b>1-6 marks</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A basic analysis and limited evaluation of the issue.</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>• Little or no use of the views of scholars/schools of thought.</li> <li>• Limited analysis of the nature of connections between the various elements of the approaches studied.</li> <li>• Some use of basic specialist language and vocabulary.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                     |
| 0    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No relevant analysis or evaluation.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |

## GCE A LEVEL RELIGIOUS STUDIES

### COMPONENT 1: OPTION B – A STUDY OF ISLAM

#### SUMMER 2025 MARK SCHEME

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

#### Section A

1. (a) Examine ways in which family life is important in Islam. [AO1 20]

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

- Muslims place great importance on the family. It is seen as the basis of society and an important part of Islam.
- **Babies are welcomed into the faith** with the aqiqah ceremony and various birth rituals, including whispering the call to prayer into the ear. This is often done by father or grandfather. Family members are showing that they intend to introduce Islam to the child.
- Muslims see supporting the **young and bringing them up in Islam as a religious obligation**. The mother in the home is often the first to teach a child their first few words of the Qur'an. The traditions of the faith are instilled into children from an early age through their family.
- Whilst a mosque may provide education through a madrassah, the practice of prayer requires a **routine of praying five times a day** at set times. These include before dawn and after dark. Often this routine is established at home, and whether the child grows up to follow it depends upon the practice of the family.
- During the day, a **family may include aspects of Islam** such as short du'a prayers at mealtimes to thank God for providing the food. Using words such as 'inshallah' and 'alhamdulillah' meaning if God wills and thanks to God, become part of the normal speech of the family, instilling a sense of obedience to God to practice Islam.
- The family is the **centre for gatherings during Ramadan**, when they meet daily for iftar meals at the end of a day's fasting, and then again before dawn for the pre-dawn sehri meal. On the occasion of the Id festivals, celebrating in the family is a focus for the religious occasion.
- Muslims **often live in extended families and care for elderly**. This is seen as part of the practice of Islam as well as formal rituals. Extended family life provides the context for the care given, which can also include care for orphans, which Muhammad placed great emphasis on.
- When **preparing for marriage**, the family are usually involved in agreeing the partner and may contribute to discussions by encouraging the man and woman to choose someone who is committed to practice Islam. This helps to strengthen their practice.

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

(b) 'There is nothing more central to the Islamic religion than family.'

Evaluate this view.

[AO2 30]

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

- The Islamic religion includes beliefs, such as **tawhid** (oneness of God), which is reflected in the **shahadah**, the declaration of faith. This is the difference between a Muslim and a non-Muslim and is required to be believed and stated in order to convert to Islam. It could be argued that tawhid and the shahadah are central to Islam, much more so than the family.
- The Islamic religion includes **practices such as salah (prayer)** and the Five Pillars of Islam. In day-to-day life, Muslims are required to pray wherever they are, be it at home with the family, at a mosque, or alone. It could be argued that this practice of prayer is more central to Islam than the family.
- Nevertheless, the **family is considered central to the upbringing of the child**. It is introduced to Islam, taught the first few words of the Qur'an, and imbibed with Islamic culture in the home context. If it were not for the family, maybe a child would grow up not knowing Islamic beliefs or how to pray. The family, then, is the essential unit at the centre of faith.
- The family is central to the practice of **Ramadan**, when people to join together daily for meals. The family often support each other to perform the **Hajj** pilgrimage, accompany women, and assist the elderly and disabled to complete the arduous journey.
- **Muhammad placed importance on the family as well as beliefs and practices**. Whilst the main beliefs and practices could be said to be more formalised through scholarly interpretation of his sunna, that does not necessarily mean they are more central to the Islamic religion. Muhammad's character was also an important part of the sunna and it is this which provides inspiration for Muslim families, including his compassion for children and orphans.
- Discussion could focus on the **wording of the statement**. To be central to Islam is not necessarily the same as important: it could be said that belief is most important but family is still most central to establishing a culture of Islamic practice from the home. On the other hand, it might be argued that whilst family could be considered central, so could many other aspects of Islam.

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

2. (a) **Examine how migration has contributed to the challenges of being a Muslim in Britain.**

[AO1 20]

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

- **Islam came to Britain through migration.** Small numbers of Muslims existing in nineteenth-century Britain, but most came after World War Two, from Commonwealth Countries. Initially, many came to work to help rebuilt Britain after the war. Men were then joined by their families and, as time went on, second and third generations grew up having lived all their lives in Britain.
- This has given many Muslims a **rich and diverse cultural heritage**. Young Muslims might experience many different cultural festivals, such as Christmas, Eid and Divali, through their experience of inter-faith cities. They might learn more about others but at the same time face challenges. How far should they celebrate with those of other faiths to show mutual respect and understanding? How far does involvement in another's festival detract from the purity of Islam?
- This has also created **confusion and split loyalties to some Muslims**. Some look to their country of ethnic origin for inspiration, but find they have differences with people who live there when they visit. Some Islamic scholars promote integration, others separation and living in largely separate communities.
- In daily life, there are obvious challenges which might be explored: **how to pray** at set times throughout the day when most modern Britons continue with work or school. **Fasting** in Ramadan can offer particular challenges when others around are eating, or the days are long in summer in Britain.
- Yet some challenges are also **opportunities to share** the faith of Islam and to grapple with questions of Islamic Law about how to interpret the requirements in a non-Muslim state. Islamic scholars have made various differing opinions (fatwahs) about whether it is necessary to eat meat specifically labelled halal, or whether meat considered from the people of the book in Britain, can be considered acceptable. Resolving these issues is a challenge for Muslims.
- **Arranged marriage** is a challenge for many: an expectation of the older generation but a difficulty for many younger Muslims who want to choose their own partner in common with the norms of the UK. With this in mind, some teach Muslims not to mix freely between men and women, whereas others find this culturally acceptable in Britain today.

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

- (b) 'Total assimilation into a secular society is impossible for Muslims in Britain.'

Evaluate this view.

[AO2 30]

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

- **Secular society** is where religion has no influence on law or how the country operates. Schools provide non-religious education; laws are not based on any religion; religious considerations are not part of culture when it comes to the norms and expectations of behaviour.
- This might seem to be the **opposite of Islamic or religious societies**. Islam is based on the belief in one God who controls everything. God's revelations cover not just prayer but all aspects of life. Muslims look to the Qur'an for guidance about everything: law, morality, for behaviour in society and all possible matters.
- **Religious obligations** such as prayer and fasting might come in the way of attending social events, work or other secular aspects, in which case a Muslim might choose to follow their Islamic requirements and avoid total assimilation.
- It might be argued that assimilation is possible alongside religious obligations, because prayer rooms and other facilities have been provided in many places to accommodate Muslims, as a result of the secular ethos of treating all equally, including religious groups.
- **Food laws** such as not eating pork or drinking alcohol, and eating halal meat, might divide Muslims from secular social occasions, making total assimilation impossible. Or, it could be argued that in diverse secular society, there is almost always provision to include Muslims as well as others with dietary requirements.
- There are **some aspects of secular society** which Muslims may find difficult. Secular society sees different forms of family and relationship as equally valid, such as those based on gay marriage. Many Muslims object to this, seeing it as sinful in Islam. However, there are also some who take a different interpretation and do manage to assimilate, seeing it as a means to live the life they were meant to and not in contradiction with Islam.
- It could even be argued that this is impossible because **Britain is not entirely secular**. There exist Christian faith schools which are popular amongst Muslim parents as they provide a faith-based education. Holidays are based around the Christian calendar and Christianity has influence in moral considerations when laws are made. Some Muslims choose Britain as their home because of these reasons.

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

## Section B

### 3. (a) Explain three distinctive practices followed by Shi'a Muslims. [AO1 20]

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

- Candidates can choose any three practices which they can explain distinctive aspects to. The main ones chosen are likely to be:
- **Khums** is a tax paid to Imams to distribute to the needy. This is different from zakah, paid by Shi'a and Sunni Muslims usually at 2.5% of profit. Khums is levied at 20% and is paid to the Imams of mosques who organise it for the welfare of the needy. A portion may also be used to support the Imams. This helps in the leadership of the faithful for Shi'a Muslims who organise the collection and distribution through local mosques.
- **Ashura**, marked by processions and plays emphasising sorrow and mourning. This includes self-flagellation, either symbolic or actual, which marks the harm felt by Husayn and his family who were martyred at Karbala. Sunni Muslims do not mark Ashura in this way, and some frown on the use of self-flagellation, depending on how far it is taken.
- **Pilgrimage** to the tombs of Imams who were influential in the Shi'a faith, such as Imam Ali's tomb in Najaf, present day Iraq. The Shi'a pilgrims feel it is a duty and an act of devotion to pray at the tombs and gain spiritual blessings from closeness to the Imams who themselves were from the family of Muhammad and recognised as God's representatives to lead the faithful in prayer. The Imams are not given the same degree of prominence in Sunni Islam.
- **Prayer**. Shi'a Muslims complete the five daily prayers as Sunnis but with some differences. They usually combine the midday and afternoon prayer and then the sunset and night prayers. Shi'a Muslims perform wudu (purification) before every prayer, regardless of whether they still have it from the previous occasion. During the standing position, Shi'a Muslims hold their hands by their sides instead of together in front. When stating the Shahadah, Shi'a Muslims then add some words of respect to Ali. These differences are explained because the Shi'a trace their authority to traditions passed down from Ali and his descendants, in the line of the Prophet's family, which may be slightly different from the Sunni who have alternative sources of narration for such traditions.
- **Muta** (temporary marriage) and **Taqiyya** (concealing belief) are other distinctive practices which might be explained.

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

- (b) 'There is nothing unique about any Shi'a practice.'

Evaluate this view.

[AO2 30]

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

- To be truly **unique** suggests that a practice cannot be found elsewhere. To be totally unique suggests not just the exact practice, but all aspects of it.
- Shi'a **prayer** practices have much in common with Sunni Islam, so much that Sunni Muslims may join with Shi'a to pray on occasion. All of the main sections of the unit of prayer, a rakah, are performed and most are identical. This suggests that prayer in Shi'a practice is not unique.
- **Pilgrimages to the tombs of Imams** could be said to have much in common with Sufi practices. There are many Sufi saints within Sunni Islam, and some Muslims visit their tombs and read du'a prayers at the sites. Although there are others who disapprove or even reject such actions, the division of opinion is blurred between Shi'a and Sunni so the Shi'a practices are not entirely unique.
- **Ashura** is perhaps the most distinctive Shi'a practice. Self-flagellation, in memory of Husayn's martyrdom, might appear totally unique. Generally, Sunni Muslims do not mark this event and may remember Ashura for different reasons and in less marked ways. The emphasis on sorrow and suffering appears to be unique, with wailing and crying carried out by some.
- It might be argued that aspects of **Ashura** are not entirely unique to Shi'a Islam. Some Sufis carry out acts of devotion to God which require selfless devotion, such as staying up all night in prayer and wearing only coarse woollen rags, to associate with poverty and humility. Some commonality might be seen regarding self-sacrifice.
- **Khums**, although seen as a Shi'a practice, has been discussed by some Sunni scholars. The concept of supporting the poor is shared by all Muslims. Although Imams are viewed differently by Sunnis, they still raise money to support them to ensure effective leadership of mosques and communities. This may not be so formalised as Khums but is not entirely different in reality.
- Nevertheless, the **reasons behind practices** should also be considered, and if different reasons are considered, the whole practice might be considered entirely different. Ultimately it comes down to faith and authority, and whether aspects of practices can be traced through common traditions such as hadith, or whether they are only to be found in Shi'a traditions.

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

4. (a) **Examine the impact of the Night of Power on the life of Muhammad in Makkah.** [AO1 20]

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

- Muhammad used to go to caves and desert locations to meditate about God. **One night he went to a cave on Mount Hira.** Angel Jibril appeared in a miracle and gave Muhammad the first verses of the Qur'an to read. Muhammad was illiterate and said that he could not read. However, after three times of asking, he was able to read. Muhammad returned to his wife Khadijah, shivering and shaking.
- **Muhammad was clearly shaken by the event.** He was given confidence by Khadijah and her cousin Waraqah, a Christian, who said that Muhammad had received a real revelation which was genuinely from God. This helped to address Muhammad's fears and give him confidence to go forward.
- Yet, Muhammad was left wondering because no further revelations came for some time, and he lay awake at night worrying until Sura Duha (sura 93) was revealed. This gave him confidence and shortly afterwards more revelations followed, on the basis of which Muhammad began his public preaching.
- Before the Night of Power, Muhammad was a successful **businessman**. Afterwards, his attention was diverted to his new mission, which became more important to him than his business interests. His business suffered, as members of the Quryash tribe boycotted Muhammad and the Muslims since the preaching against idols harmed their business with the pilgrimage trade.
- Before the revelations, Muhammad was well liked and respected by his **family**. Afterwards, many members of his family deserted him, although he retained the protection of his Uncle Abu Talib. After he died, protection was lost and persecution started. Abu Lahab made his sons divorce Muhammad's daughters because of Muhammad's preaching, causing distress and dishonour to Muhammad.
- Muhammad had inevitably been involved in some **pagan practices**, such as circling the Ka'aba in a state of nakedness, during the period of idolatry. After the Night of Power this changed; he clothed respectfully and made clear his opposition to the idols.
- The Night of Power led to the development of a new, close-knit community of Muslims who banded together to survive persecution. Muhammad gained resilience from his experiences and became a religious leader in addition to his business acumen. This prepared him for his role as a **complete leader** of the city of Madinah, after the migration to escape from the Makkans.

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

- (b) **‘Muhammad’s teachings were determined by the context of pre-Islamic Arabia.’**

**Evaluate this view.**

**[AO2 30]**

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

- Muhammad’s preaching began after his first revelation in 610CE, in a period known as the age of ignorance or pre-Islamic Arabia. The main feature of this period was the **worship of idols**. Muhammad warned people not to worship idols and taught them to worship one, unseen God. This suggests that his teachings were totally focused on this age.
- **Muhammad’s teachings in Makkah** were focused on the main beliefs of Islam: tawhid, risalah and akhirah. These are the oneness of God, the validity of messengers and the possibility of life after death according to God’s judgement. The way in which he taught them was focused on the hostile pagan Arabs and he tried to get through to them with stark and direct language.
- **Muhammad’s teachings in Madinah** took on a different style and covered the need to keep peace between different communities and live together in the city. Teachings about trade and poor due, for example, met the needs in Madinah so were determined by that time.
- However, it could be argued that these are basic Islamic beliefs held by all Muslims **for all time**, so Muhammad’s messages were not determined by pre-Islamic Arabia at all. He was seen as the seal of the prophets, completing the earlier revelations which were essentially the same and believed by Muslims to be timeless. If the revelations were timeless then surely his teachings were determined by them rather than one specific time.
- The way in which Muhammad communicated his **messages included many subtleties** which may easily be lost on the modern reader. Interpretation of Muhammad’s sunna and the Qur’an which he taught have been understood alongside the context of those revelations in guides produced by Muslim scholars throughout the ages, suggesting that Muhammad’s teachings were determined by his time.
- **Muhammad’s teachings are still a major source of shari’a, Islamic law**. Scholars turn first to the Qur’an and second to his teachings, suggesting that they are regarded as an important primary source to guide Muslims even today.
- However, the fact that **many modern issues are not covered** by these teachings means scholars need to make fresh interpretations and suggests that Muhammad’s teachings were determined by his time and need reinterpretation for the modern day.

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

5. (a) Explain why sources other than the Qur'an are used for shari'a. [AO1 20]

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

- **The Qur'an is the first source of shari'a.** As the directly revealed word of God, this is considered beyond question by Muslims and is the best guide to help them live their lives. Nothing can be accepted within Islam which contradicts the Qur'an.
- **Muhammad's examples, the sunna,** are also a primary source of shari'a. Muslims believe that Muhammad was God's messenger and set a perfect example for Muslims, so by copying his actions, they are following what God wanted.
- **The sunna adds more detail** to the Qur'an about many issues such as prayer, zakah and how to trade ethically. Where the Qur'an gives a broad indication, Muhammad showed Muslims what it meant: how to pray five times a day, when to pray, the actions to perform, the words to say and so on. Without the sunna, Muslims might not follow the Five Pillars in the way that they do.
- **Muhammad's sunna** was known by those who witnessed it, his companions, but after they died there was a need to record it for future generations. Therefore, hadith collectors drew together and checked known sayings with the reliability of the narrators and the subject matter of known teachings. The hadith are used as a source for sunna which is used for shari'a.
- There are some issues on which the Qur'an and hadith do not give clear answers. Some of these are where different traditions appear, at first sight, not to agree. In such cases, Islamic scholars meet and try to agree a ruling by **consensus**. This additional source is called **ijma**. It is used only where the previous sources do not resolve an issue and where guidance is required, and never in contradiction to the former.
- Furthermore, new situations have arisen such as genetic engineering, smoking, modern technology and issues of living in different communities. These are covered with guidance using **qiyas**. Islamic scholars look for **analogy** with issues covered in the Qur'an and hadith and make new applications for today.
- **Additional sources** may be used, such as taking regard to local culture and habit. For Shi'a Muslims, slightly different hadith books may be used and the authority of the Imam to interpret the Qur'an is also a source, since the Imam is believed to be free from error.

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

- (b) 'The use of sources other than the Qur'an challenges the divine nature of shari'a.'

Evaluate this view.

[AO2 30]

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

- **The Qur'an** is the word of God, directly revealed, so its use in shari'a gives Islamic law its divine quality. If the Qur'an commands Muslims to pray, shari'a incorporates that teaching as a ruling, as it does with many other matters.
- **Muslims look up to Islamic law** as something which originates with God and is a way to live their lives in accordance with God's will. It is considered by many to be beyond human corruption.
- It could be argued that **Muhammad's sunna** does not detract from the divine nature, because Muhammad was God's prophet. Who could know better than what God wanted in the eyes of Muslims? The sunna should be seen in the context of applying the Qur'an, wholly focused on putting God's will into action, not detracting from the divine nature of shari'a.
- However, the use of the **hadith traditions** for the sunna creates questions in the minds of some, because of the verification process. Many, particularly Sunni Muslims, accept that the hadith are accurate and therefore this strengthens the shari'a and its divine nature; others, such as the Qur'anists, only accept the Qur'an itself and reject the hadith.
- **Additional sources of ijma and qiyas** are never in contradiction of the Qur'an, and are, as far as possible, based on agreement about what the word of God means and analogy with any issue covered clearly by the Qur'an. This could be interpreted as strengthening the shari'a divine nature to apply to modern situations.
- **On the other hand**, additional sources are created by fallible human beings, who might have the best intentions but do not have the same connection with God as Muhammad. The more interpretation or reinterpretations made, the risk of change, innovation or the sin of bid'ah. The multiplicity of different rulings today suggests shari'a has verged away from the unity which might be expected of divine nature.
- Not all agree with the assumption behind the statement. **The suggestion that shari'a has a divine nature at all is unclear** because there is not a directly revealed shari'a. The Qur'an takes a vocative tone in many places and may be interpreted in different ways. Shari'a might be better interpreted as a guideline based on that, rather than a book of law, revealed from the heavens.

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