



GCE A LEVEL MARKING SCHEME

SUMMER 2024

**A LEVEL
RELIGIOUS STUDIES - COMPONENT 1
OPTION B: A STUDY OF ISLAM
A120UB0-1**

About this marking scheme

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

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

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

Marking guidance for examiners, please apply carefully and consistently:

Positive marking

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

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

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

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

Rules for Marking

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

Banded mark schemes

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

Banded mark schemes stage 1 – deciding on the band

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

If an answer covers different aspects of different bands within the mark scheme, a 'best fit' approach should be adopted to decide on the band and then the candidate's response should be used to decide on the mark within the band. For instance if a response is mainly in band 2 but with a limited amount of band 3 content, the answer would be placed in band 2, but the mark awarded would be close to the top of band 2 as a result of the band 3 content. 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;">Assessment Objective AO1 – Part (a) questions 20 marks</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of religion and belief, including:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>religious, philosophical and/or ethical thought and teaching</i> - <i>influence of beliefs, teachings and practices on individuals, communities and societies</i> - <i>cause and significance of similarities and differences in belief, teaching and practice</i> - <i>approaches to the study of religion and belief.</i> |
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| 5 | <p style="text-align: center;">17-20 marks</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thorough, accurate and relevant knowledge and understanding of religion and belief. • An extensive and relevant response which answers the specific demands of the question set. • The response demonstrates extensive depth and/or breadth. Excellent use of evidence and examples. • Thorough and accurate reference made to sacred texts and sources of wisdom, where appropriate. • Insightful connections are made between the various approaches studied. • An extensive range of views of scholars/schools of thought used accurately and effectively. • Thorough and accurate use of specialist language and vocabulary in context. |
| 4 | <p style="text-align: center;">13-16 marks</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accurate and relevant knowledge and understanding of religion and belief. • A detailed, relevant response which answers the specific demands of the question set. • The response demonstrates depth and/or breadth. Good use of evidence and examples. • Accurate reference made to sacred texts and sources of wisdom, where appropriate. • Purposeful connections are made between the various approaches studied. • A range of scholarly views/schools of thought used largely accurately and effectively. • Accurate use of specialist language and vocabulary in context. |
| 3 | <p style="text-align: center;">9-12 marks</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mainly accurate and relevant knowledge and understanding of religion and belief. • A satisfactory response, which generally answers the main demands of the question set. • The response demonstrates depth and/or breadth in some areas. Satisfactory use of evidence and examples. • Mainly accurate reference made to sacred texts and sources of wisdom, where appropriate. • Sensible connections made between the various approaches studied. • A basic range of scholarly views/schools of thought used. • Mainly accurate use of specialist language and vocabulary in context. |
| 2 | <p style="text-align: center;">5-8 marks</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited knowledge and understanding of religion and belief. Basic level of accuracy and relevance. • A basic response, addressing some of the demands of the question set. • The response demonstrates limited depth and/or breadth, including limited use of evidence and examples. • Some accurate reference made to sacred texts and sources of wisdom, where appropriate. • Makes some basic connections between the various approaches studied. • A limited range of scholarly views/schools of thought used. • Some accurate use of specialist language and vocabulary in context. |
| 1 | <p style="text-align: center;">1-4 marks</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Very limited knowledge and understanding of religion and belief. Low level of accuracy and relevance. • A very limited response, with little attempt to address the question. • The response demonstrates very limited depth and/or breadth. Very limited use of evidence and examples. • Little or no reference made to sacred texts and sources of wisdom, where appropriate. • Little or no use of scholarly views/schools of thought. • Very few or no connections made between the various approaches studied. • Some grasp of basic specialist language and vocabulary. <p>N.B. A maximum of 2 marks should be awarded for a response that only demonstrates 'knowledge in isolation'</p> |
| 0 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No relevant information. |

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

GCE A LEVEL RELIGIOUS STUDIES – COMPONENT 1 OPTION B

A STUDY OF ISLAM

SUMMER 2024 MARK SCHEME

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

Section A

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 (a) Explain the importance of the shari'a (the way) for Muslims. [AO1 20]

- **Shari'a is known as religious law** for Muslims. It is regarded as a sacred law, because it is based on the Qur'an and examples of Muhammad (pbuh), which show Muslims what God wants them to do in their lives. Therefore, it has special status. It is not law based on the agreement of people or for practical benefit; it is important in that it has been defined to a great extent by God, so has authority for Muslims.
- **Religious observances are governed by shari'a law.** Not only traditions about how and when to pray, but rulings about the importance of prayer and many other religious acts, are given by shari'a. For example, one shari'a tradition is that Muslims should attend Friday prayers at a mosque. Therefore, Muslims base their daily religious activities around shari'a requirements as far as they are able to.
- **Shari'a guides details of worship and the Five Pillars.** Islam follows many rituals which are derived and followed in exactly the same way as Muhammad introduced them. Sometimes scholars' rule by consensus (ijma) or make analogy (qiyas) with established rulings, where something is unknown. In all cases care is taken to follow God's will, since Muslims believe following the divine law will help them show obedience to God and attain eternal life in heaven after judgement.
- **Shari'a contains five categories of action.** There range from compulsory (wajib) to approved and encouraged (mustahab) to forbidden (haram). Muslims consider these in their daily lives. For example, they might take care over what they eat, and avoid eating pork as it is considered forbidden (haram). They might give money to charity to help the poor, considering it an approved and encouraged act.
- **Many Muslims marry according to shari'a.** There are shari'a regulations which guide Muslims to make a contract (nikkah) of marriage and stipulate certain terms, such as payment to the woman in case of divorce. Shari'a courts are often used to rule on disagreements, rights to divorce and the terms of separation.
- **Muslims sometimes prefer shari'a,** with its rules and courts, as they may find shari'a comes with a degree of legitimacy and gives them confidence they are doing the right thing. Other Muslims might find that modern, secular law is preferred as they might find it easier to gain women's rights, in principle granted by Islam, through secular courts.

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

- (b) 'The doors to ijtiḥād closed long ago.'
Evaluate this view.

[AO2 30]

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

- **Ijtiḥād means intellectual struggle.** Not all questions are answered directly by the Qur'an and Ḥadīth, the primary sources of shari'a. After the Prophet died, his companions and those who followed them knew the sources of Islamic law well and made rulings to fill in guidance where people asked for further details. This was the original meaning and context of ijtiḥād.
- **The time of Islamic scholar Al-Ghazali is considered the time when the doors or gates of ijtiḥād were closed.** He lived in the eleventh century, around 500 years after Muhammad (pbuh). Al-Ghazali criticised some Muslims who engaged with philosophy and promoted traditional Islamic practices. He and others at the time argued that the Prophet and his companions knew best and that so much time had passed, people of his day were not sufficiently qualified to make intellectual endeavours in the form of ijtiḥād. In any case, it was argued that all the main questions had already been decided and to open questions again would be unhelpful.
- **Modern day reformists promote ijtiḥād** and say it is a means for Islam to become more relevant for the present day. They argue that ijtiḥād is more relevant today than ever, because so many new situations have occurred which Muslims of today need answers to. What about living in multi-faith communities? Issues involving technology? Reformer Dr Muqtedar Khan argues that Muslims should engage more than ever to address these.
- **Regardless of differing opinions, many scholars do carry out ijtiḥād in the present day.** Although criticised by some, prominent people of different traditions have exercised their abilities to guide Muslims by providing intellectual opinions on matters of faith. In the Shi'a sect, many have never regarded the gates of ijtiḥād to have closed and are regarded as having the ability to interpret the Qur'an without error, so are suitably qualified to make new interpretations.
- **Some, such as those following Salafi interpretations, encourage the return to literal readings of the Qur'an** and the ways of the companions of Muhammad (pbuh). Some question ijtiḥād and see it as leading Muslims away from traditional Islamic practices. If it is believed Muhammad completed the revelations of Islam in their entirety, then, logically, further intellectual endeavours are not necessary. There is a question mark about how far ijtiḥād might lead not just to intellectual discussion, but to reinterpretation of what has long ago been decided.

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

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- (a) Explain the use of the Qur'an and sunna (clear trodden path) as sources of shari'a (the way). [AO1 20]

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

- **Shari'a is known as Islamic law.** It is derived from several sources, including the primary sources of the Qur'an and sunna of the Prophet Muhammad evidenced in the Hadith. The secondary sources included the consensus of scholars (ijma) and the use of analogy (qiyas).
- **The Qur'an is the first primary source of Islamic law.** That gives it special importance for Muslims. It is regarded as the word of God, directly revealed to Muhammad over 23 years, beginning on the Night of Power. He could not read or write, so his experience in which he miraculously read the first words of the Qur'an is seen as a reason why it must have come from God. This gives it special authority for Muslims.
- **Nothing can contradict the Qur'an.** As God's word, Muslims consider the Qur'an to be directly revealed by the one and only God, who is beyond question. This makes the Qur'an a source of shari'a which cannot be questioned. If any other source is to be used, it must be in agreement with and never in contradiction to the Qur'an.
- **The Qur'an and sunna (examples) of Muhammad are used together.** The Qur'an is sometimes described as giving the theoretical basis of beliefs and the examples of Muhammad show Muslims how to put them into practice. For many aspects of shari'a, definitive laws and guidance are required, such as the rules around prayers, marriage, divorce, trading, crime and punishment. The majority of these come from the sunna of Muhammad as evidenced by the Hadith. Evidence and examples given here are relevant to this answer.
- **An example of how the two are used together is in religious law concerning prayer.** The Qur'an commands Muslims to pray, it mentions they should pray to one God and reject idols and says they should pray in the morning and the evening. The Sunna shows Muslims the exact times to calculate the prayers, which movements to make, the actions and words, and fills in all of the details.
- **Other examples may be given, such as the payment of zakah (purification through giving); or any aspect of moral and ethical teaching.** These originate from the sunna of Muhammad and his examples in Madinah. He would receive revelations of the Qur'an and put them into practice with his sunna, forming the two primary sources of Islam for later Islamic scholars to interpret.

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

- (b) 'Every aspect of shari'a comes from God.'
Evaluate this view.

[AO2 30]

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

- **Shari'a is considered divinely inspired law.** It originates from God and is sometimes called God's law. This is not the same thing as saying every aspect comes from God. This statement encourages discussion about how far the interpretation and use of shari'a can be said to come from God directly, through inspiration, as a focus on, or not at all.
- **Sources of shari'a include the Qur'an and the sunna.** The Qur'an is the directly revealed word of God, and since this is the primary and first source of shari'a, all aspects of shari'a derive from it. This shows that every aspect of shari'a is linked back to God and God's revelation.
- **The sunna of Muhammad, his examples, are not directly from God.** However, he was a divinely appointed prophet, so in that sense his message came from God. He also is considered the perfect model by Muslims, a messenger to tell them God's commands. So, when shari'a laws are based on Muhammad's examples, they are based on God's revelations and come from God in that way.
- **The sunna are recorded in the Hadith.** Collectors such as Bukhari spent many years travelling the Middle East and central Asia, asking for traditions of sayings passed down from Muhammad, and checking them as far as they could. All narrators were checked for piety and belief, so they had respect for God, but the narrators themselves were human voices and some have questioned some categorises of Hadith. The implication is that they are not considered from God.
- **Scholars interpret the shari'a and reach consensus (ijma).** This is particularly where the Qur'an and sunna are not clearcut, or a new situation has arisen. Qiyas, analogy with a similar, established ruling, may also be used. These are always in agreement with God's word, the Qur'an, but how far they actually come from God is open to question. Scholars cannot claim direct guidance because that is the arena of prophets and there are no prophets after Muhammad, in Muslim belief.
- **Shari'a in the modern world** is sometimes held up as an example for those who wish to see an Islamic way of life brought into government and society. This can help society to be God-focused. However, others criticise this and say that it is better to achieve God-centredness through personal devotion. For some people, shari'a can feel oppressive and lead away to division.

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

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

- Masjids (mosques) are widely known as the place of prayer for Muslims around the world. They provide a clean and quiet space where Muslims can join together to pray in congregation. The direction of prayer is marked by the direction of prayer mats and a niche called a Mihrab, which points in the direction of the Qiblah in Makkah, the direction towards which all Muslims face whilst praying.
- In order to pray Muslims first perform wudu, ritual ablution. So, mosques usually have facilities for washing. They also normally have information about the prayer times, mats, Qur'ans which may be read, prayer beads for meditation and prayer timetables to help organise the timetable for Muslims.
- Jummah prayer on Fridays takes place in the mosque, and larger Id prayers to celebrate these festivals. Mosques may employ an Imam who will deliver sermons to help teach the faithful about Islam so Muslims may learn more about their faith.
- Most mosques have a Madrassah, classes for children to learn how to read the Qur'an in Arabic and say their prayers. Some also have classes for older students to learn the art of beautiful recitation or to learn the Qur'an off by heart. Some mosques also have a library of Islamic books to help increase the knowledge of Muslims.
- A mosque is often the centre for a Muslim community which can organise social events and charitable collections. When a member of the community dies the mosque may organise funeral prayers and support for the family.
- The Prophet's Mosque in Madinah was a centre for peace and reconciliation, and was a simple courtyard shaded by palm leaves. Some mosques today are centres for making calligraphy or other forms of art which have grown up over the years.
- Mosques may hold shari'a court hearings, usually focused on family matters such as divorce agreements.
- Some mosques may have an associated place for the veneration of the tomb of a holy person, such as the Imam Ali Mosque in Najaf, although it is made clear that only Allah is worshipped. Some groups of Muslims disapprove of the veneration of tombs.
- Mosques vary from the large holy mosque in Makkah, which has facilities for circumambulating the Ka'aba for Hajj pilgrims, to small village or wayside facilities which perform basic roles.

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

- (b) **‘All functions of masjids are equally important.’**
Evaluate this view.

[AO2 30]

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

- It could be argued that masjids (mosques) provide a place of prostration, and this is more important than any other function. Muslims follow the five pillars of Islam which requires them to pray five times per day. As compulsory actions it could be said that these are the most important actions for Muslims to complete. Prayer includes prostration so mosques provide facilities for this.
- Furthermore, Muslims might find it difficult to find a clean, quiet place if it were not for mosques. They might not gain the motivation or know the direction of prayer. Mosques could be seen as essential to focus Muslims on their prayers.
- However, zakah is also one of the five pillars of Islam. Zakah requires calculation and the monies from it organising to be distributed to those in need. It could be argued that mosques are essential in organising these services.
- Without knowing how to pray, there might be no point organising a place of prostration. Therefore, it could be argued that providing education for children and new Muslims in how to say their prayers and read the Qur'an in Arabic are equally as important as providing a place to pray.
- Furthermore, prayers must have the correct niyat (intention) behind them. There is no point in a Muslim joining in without understanding or making a commitment to what they believe. Therefore, it could be argued that the Imam's sermons and messages for Muslims to understand their faith are also important functions of the mosque. Indeed, the Imam performs a sermon on Fridays at which time Muslim men are expected to attend the mosque if they can, whereas at other times during the week when they prostrate in prayer they may pray in other places.
- It might be argued that drawing the community together is more important than any one single function of a mosque. Developing strength and brotherhood can enthuse Muslims to become more committed to their faith and help those in need.
- In countries and communities in which Muslims are a minority, such as the UK, mosques can perform important roles to support Muslims as well as combating intolerance by reaching out to others with interfaith dialogue or open day sessions at mosques.
- It might be said that the Prophet did not define any one function as most important in a mosque, or that some other function is most important, dependent on the argument taken by the candidate.

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

0 4 (a) Explain how observing Ramadan develops Muslim spirituality. [AO1 20]

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

- Ramadan is the Muslim month of fasting. Muslims fast during daylight hours, and make extra effort to read the Qur'an and avoid swearing, backbiting and other features of bad character.
- Before fasting, Muslims get up early to eat the pre-dawn meal. At sunset, they gather to break the fast with an 'iftaar'. These meals are occasions when Muslims come together. Many families are busy with work, school and other events; but in Ramadan they make a point of sharing meals together.
- Special evening prayers called tarawih are said by many Muslims. This involves going to mosque to hear the Imam read the Qur'an all the way through, over the 29 or 30 days of Ramadan.
- Some mosques also give short talks about the meaning of the Qur'an. These services are some of the best attended apart from the regular weekly Jummah prayers and help to bring worshippers together.
- The intensity of attending a long prayer and recitation service every evening for a month brings Muslims into more regular contact with their fellows than they might otherwise be, making Ramadan a time when they feel togetherness.
- Ramadan is a time when many charity collections are organised to help others who are in need, be they locally or around the world. Whether directly involved or indirectly through donation, the minds of Muslims are more focused on those in need especially Muslims from around the world. Their thoughts are with those who do not have enough to eat, creating a feeling of empathy and togetherness with the less well off.
- Some Muslims make a special effort to develop good character in Ramadan and try to forgive others and make amends with those they have fallen out over the year. Some make a special effort to achieve reconciliation before the end of the month so that they can make a fresh start before Id (Eid).
- Towards the end of Ramadan, some Muslims enter into spiritual retreat for the last ten days. This brings them close to others who they join in seclusion, focusing on devotions to complete the month.

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

- (b) **‘The greatest benefit of Ramadan is to unite the community.’**
Evaluate this view. [AO2 30]

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

- Ramadan is said to have many benefits for Muslims. Some of these are spiritual rewards and others practical benefits.
- According to a tradition of the Prophet, the devil is locked up during Ramadan making it a month when all devotions are particularly valuable. Muslims fast because it is a pillar of Islam and a commandment that they should fulfil, if they are able. Fulfilling the Five Pillars is a test of faith which counts in favour of Muslims on the Day of Judgement. Every person is judged according to their own deeds and intentions, suggesting that it is the individual, who gains the greatest benefit from Ramadan.
- Ramadan is also a time when the Muslim community comes together. Special services in mosques are well attended for Ramadan, and Muslims come together to learn more about their faith. Many Muslims find this a time when they are inspired and gain strength by interacting with their fellow Muslims as if they were one family.
- It might seem that Muslims are often divided between different parts of the world, different traditions and different sects. However, Ramadan is a time when the fasting routine is more or less the same during the day for nearly all Muslims.
- It could be said that Ramadan achieves this unity which other parts of Islam do not achieve as well, so therefore the greatest benefit of Ramadan is to unite the community.
- However, it could be argued that even Ramadan fails to unite the Muslim community. Shi’a Muslims generally do not follow tarawih prayers and there are considerable differences between different mosques around the timings for starting and ending fasting during the summer months in the U.K. A greater difference is over the timing of the end of the month. Some Muslims follow one interpretation, based on the sighting with the human eye of the new moon in the local area; others say a calculated or telescopic sighting from anywhere in the world is accepted. The effect is that some Muslims begin celebrating Eid on a day when other Muslims are still fasting. Since eating during the fast is considered forbidden, and fasting on the day of Eid is a forbidden or haram act, this has been a source of division amongst Muslims.
- It could be argued that Ramadan is not about any particular benefit: it is about following Allah’s will and that He will choose to reward according to His will.

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

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 (a) Explain the purpose of zakah (purification through giving). [AO1 20]

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

- **Zakah is the third pillar of Islam**, one of five compulsory acts which Muslims are required to fulfil during their lifetimes if they are able. As such it is an act of obedience to God and an act of worship, which Muslims carry out in order to please God. Additionally, zakah may be seen as an act of purification.
- **Zakah is purification from thoughts of selfishness and greed.** When a Muslim earns money, if they have wealth or profit about a certain level needed to maintain themselves and their families, they are required to give 2.5% as a zakah alms or tax payment. This makes a Muslim think that when they are earning, they should not be hoarding, and should be thinking of sharing what they have with those in need.
- **Zakah is also paid on gold, excess crops and saved money.** In days gone by these were more common ways of calculating zakah and the ways most often used in the days of Muhammad. By calculating a share to pay on saved gold and jewellery, Muslims think particularly that they should not hoard wealth. The contrast between those with possessions of gold and those hungry on the streets could not be greater: by paying zakah from one to the other is a visual way of purifying the thoughts of the former.
- **The recipients of zakah are people in need which helps encourage givers think of others.** Widows, the poor, debtors, those who are ill, converts and others are all entitled to zakah to help them in their daily lives. By giving zakah, payers think of those who are less fortunate than themselves and their minds may refocus on the needs of the less well off, promoting humility and thankfulness rather than greed and selfishness for more possession.
- **Zakah helps a believer think of God.** Just as prayer is about giving up time for God, zakah is about giving up money and giving in God's cause. Purification from selfish thoughts is also about giving up personal desires in favour of God's will; in this case to follow zakah, one of the Five Pillars of Islam. By thinking of God's will, Muslims feel they are doing something worthy and righteous which has benefit for them in the afterlife. This helps to purify them of thinking too much about life in the current, material world.

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

- (b) **‘Support for the poor is central to all aspects of Islam.’**
Evaluate this view.

[AO2 30]

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

- **Support for the poor is given by the compulsory payment of zakah.** This is one of the Five Pillars of Islam and so is expected to be fulfilled as an act of worship. This makes it central to the practice of Islam. The recipients of zakah are generally poor: those in need of basic provisions; widows; students; converts; the ill and so on. This makes the support central to Islam.
- **Support for the poor is also encouraged through khums and sadaqah.** Khums is one of the ten obligatory acts for Shi’a Muslims and is a 20% tax. Sadaqah is an additional voluntary act of charity, which could be a payment to help a charity. Furthermore, Muslims donate meat for the poor so that they can share in the joys of the Id-ul-Adha festival. This makes support for the poor central to additional, voluntary practices in Islam as well as the compulsory ones.
- **However, it could be argued that obedience to God’s commands is central to zakah,** and support for the poor is a result of this, rather than the main focus or intention. Nothing could be more central to Islam than God. Muslims make their intention to do an act of worship in dedication to God. Zakah is included in this. The poor benefit as a result, but the central focus is God.
- **Reward in the afterlife is the main aim of many Muslims.** They believe the angels are watching their every action and recording what they do, to report back to God at judgement. Many want to add good deeds to their book of life and focus on this, rather than support for the poor.
- **It may be argued that Islam supports the poor in some ways but not others.** The zakah payment seems to be a clear way of supporting the poor but other activities such as the Hajj pilgrimage require a great deal of money. Muslims who cannot afford it are exempted, but this does suggest that the completion of Hajj itself as an act of worship is more important than supporting those who are poor and do not have the funds to travel to Makkah.
- Support for the poor may be important in creating equality and a sense of togetherness in the one world-wide family of Islam (ummah); but **how far it is central to each and every action within Islam may contested.**

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