



GCE AS MARKING SCHEME

SUMMER 2025

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

B120UB0-1

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 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.

AS Generic Band Descriptors

Band	Assessment Objective AO1 – Part (a) questions [25 marks] <i>Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of religion and belief, including:</i> <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>
5	21-25 marks - Thorough, accurate and relevant knowledge and understanding of religion and belief. - An extensive and relevant response which answers the specific demands of the question set. - The response 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. - Thorough and accurate use of specialist language and vocabulary in context.
4	16-20 marks - Accurate and relevant knowledge and understanding of religion and belief. - A detailed, relevant response which answers the specific demands of the question set. - The response demonstrates depth and/or breadth. Good use of evidence and examples. - Accurate reference made to sacred texts and sources of wisdom, where appropriate. - Accurate use of specialist language and vocabulary in context.
3	11-15 marks - Mainly accurate and relevant knowledge and understanding of religion and belief. - A satisfactory response, which generally answers the main demands of the question set. - The response 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. - Mainly accurate use of specialist language and vocabulary in context.
2	6-10 marks - Limited knowledge and understanding of religion and belief. Basic level of accuracy and relevance. - A basic response, addressing some of the demands of the question set. - 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. - Some accurate use of specialist language and vocabulary in context.
1	1-5 marks - Very limited knowledge and understanding of religion and belief. Low level of accuracy and relevance. - A very limited response, with little attempt to address the question. - 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. - Some grasp of basic specialist language and vocabulary. N.B. A maximum of 2 marks should be awarded for a response that only demonstrates 'knowledge in isolation'
0	No relevant information.

Band	Assessment Objective AO2- Part (b) questions [25 marks] <i>Analyse and evaluate aspects of, and approaches to, religion and belief, including their significance, influence and study.</i>
5	21-25 marks • Confident critical analysis and perceptive evaluation of the issue. • A response that successfully identifies and thoroughly addresses the issues raised by the question set. • Thorough, sustained and clear views are given, supported by extensive, detailed reasoning and/or evidence. • Thorough and accurate use of specialist language and vocabulary in context.
4	16-20 marks • Purposeful analysis and effective evaluation of the issue. • The main issues raised by the question are identified successfully and addressed. • The views given are clearly supported by detailed reasoning and/or evidence. • Accurate use of specialist language and vocabulary in context.
3	11-15 marks • Satisfactory analysis and relevant evaluation of the issue. • Most of the issues raised by the question are identified successfully and have generally been addressed. • Most of the views given are satisfactorily supported by reasoning and/or evidence. • Mainly accurate use of specialist language and vocabulary in context.
2	6-10 marks • Some valid analysis and inconsistent evaluation of the issue. • A limited number of issues raised by the question set are identified and partially addressed. • A basic attempt to justify the views given, but they are only partially supported with reason and/or evidence. • Some accurate use of specialist language and vocabulary in context.
1	1-5 marks • A basic analysis and limited evaluation of the issue. • An attempt has been made to identify and address the issues raised by the question set. • Little attempt to justify a view with reasoning or evidence. • Some use of basic specialist language and vocabulary.
0	• No relevant analysis or evaluation.

EDUQAS GCE AS – COMPONENT 1
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To be read in conjunction with the generic level descriptors provided.

Section A

1. (a) **Explain tawhid (oneness) as the nature of God as ‘one’ with reference to Sura 112.**

[AO1 25]

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

- **Sura 112 summarises the nature of God for Muslims.** It is a short chapter in the Qur’an, the revealed word of God for Muslims, which may be interpreted or translated as: ‘Say: He is Allah, the one and Only; Allah, the Eternal, Absolute; He begetteth not, nor is He begotten; and there is none like unto Him.’ (Yusuf Ali)
- Muslims believe in tawhid, meaning the oneness of God. This is sometimes referred to as **uncompromising monotheism**, because there can be no partner besides God. In Sura 112 this is emphasised by the words one and only. Associating any partner with God is regarded a shirk, the greatest sin in Islam.
- The implications of this were that the pagan Arabs were told to stop the worship of idols, as God cannot be represented by any statue or physical form. The culmination of Muhammad’s mission was to clear the Ka’aba in Makkah of idols to enforce the worship of one God without any partner.
- The words ‘begetteth not’ may refer to there being **no sons of God**, and God is not born of anyone. This distinguishes the Islamic belief in tawhid from Christianity.
- Qualities of God are referred to: God is Eternal, Absolute and may also be referred to with **99 names** which are a means of communicating to Muslims the attributes of God. They show the unity of the supreme being which is all-powerful and able to encompass everything.
- God is also **transcendent and immanent**: above all things but also near, closer to a Muslims heart than their own jugular vein in Islamic tradition.
- God was the **creator** of the world and everything in.
- God is **omnipotent** as the only real power behind all events, none of which can happen without God’s permission.
- Sura 112 and most chapters of the Qur’an start with words in Arabic dedicating the chapter to God the **most merciful**. God’s mercy is another aspect of tawhid since all mercy ultimately comes from the one Creator.
- **Muhammad** as a prophet is separate from God and has no divine status: attributing any would be to deny tawhid.

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

(b) 'Belief in the shahadah is an entirely personal matter.'

Evaluate this view.

[AO2 25]

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

- The **shahadah is the statement of faith** in the oneness of God and that Muhammad is God's messenger. It is said on conversion (or, reversion) to Islam; during regular daily prayers, before death and at various other times in life.
- **During daily prayers** the shahadah is a condition of completion and so the sequence of prayer (rakah) includes it. This is followed by all Muslims in the same way. That would make it more than personal. However, the words themselves are uttered under the breath at that point, by each individual Muslim, who should personally believe in them. So, it is both a communal and personal matter.
- On **conversion (reversion) to Islam**, an individual should become convinced of the tenets of the faith and particularly belief in the shahadah and should not convert solely for other reasons. However, it is also important to declare this belief in front of two or more witnesses, as proof of dedication and to enable the community of believers to welcome the new Muslim and support them.
- **Birth rituals** may include stating the shahadah into the ear of a baby to welcome them into Islam. This is a welcome to the individual but also a focus for the family and an occasion which is joyfully shared.
- **Preachers** may use the shahadah in their talks and explain its meaning, hoping to gain the support of others to their cause.
- **In daily life**, an individual Muslim may utter the words of the shahadah privately or publicly in response to hearing some good news which they are relieved to hear. They may also say it as a part of du'a to beg for God's mercy at time of hardship. Both help to make a deeply personal connection with God. At the same time, both are accepted social utterances which help to unite the Muslim ummah around their belief that God is all-powerful and controlling their lives.
- Discussion might consider whether it is possible for a Muslim to consider and say the shahadah **only in a private or only in a public** setting. The exclusivity of each could be tempered by discussion of reality in the lives of different Muslims and the personal matters they might face.

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

2. (a) **Examine distinctions between nabi (prophet) and rasul (messenger).**

[AO1 25]

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

- The word **nabi** is used generally for prophet in Islam. Some Muslims refer to a tradition that there were 124 000 prophets sent to the earth over most of history. Each came with the same general teachings, a means to help people in different parts of the world and at different times.
- The **Qur'an refers to 25 prophets** by name (anbiya). These began with the first man, Adam, and ended with Muhammad, the 'seal' of the prophets, after which there can be no more.
- Some prophets left their example and taught the people, but only a few brought a **revelation from God**. These were Ibrahim, who delivered the Sahifa (Scrolls); Musa the Torah; Dawud the Zabur; Isa the Injil and finally Muhammad the Qur'an. These prophets are known as rasul prophets, but it should be noted they did not write the message themselves; they delivered a pre-written testament from God.
- **Nabi** prophets is a more general category whereas rasul prophets specifically delivered a book. Sometimes these categories are mixed and **rasuls**, in particular, did not only bring a book; they also left examples and teachings.
- **Many nabis and rasul prophets delivered warnings** which were in essence the same, tailored to the needs of the communities they lived in. Musa warned his people not to worship a sacred cow; Muhammad told the Makkans to clear the Ka'aba of idols and Nuh (Noah) preached to his people about moral acts. Therefore, the distinction with regards to the role as warners is not so clear.
- **Rasul prophets experienced particular events** in which messages were delivered. These were said to be miracles. Often angel Jibril appeared to deliver the message. In general, nabi prophets meditated and had dreams which were inspired by God, as did those who were rasul, but the events of a miraculous revelation were specific to the rasuls.
- The scholar Turner defines the role of prophets as the means: 'Allah may address man through the channel of human speech.' This applies to the rasuls. The same principles, nonetheless, were contained in the teachings of all prophets, and no special status is given to any of them.

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

(b) **‘Muhammad's prophethood was ideal in every way.’**

Evaluate this view.

[AO2 25]

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

- Muhammad was the **‘Seal of the Prophets’**, which implies he was the last, perfect, ideal final messenger of God to humankind. He came to finish God’s revelations and correct any misconceptions or errors which had arisen from former teachings.
- **Muhammad’s leadership of his community in Madinah** could be considered ideal. He was a statesman, promoted peace between different tribes and those of different faiths, and displayed skill in dealing with and resolving disputes. His determination helped Islam to survive and succeed.
- **Muhammad’s character** is considered a perfect example for others to follow. The Hadith collection of Bukhari contain many examples of how Muhammad showed compassion to others and could be considered an ideal model of how to behave and conduct a morally upright life for Muslims.
- However, **Muhammad’s message was frequently rejected in Makkah**, and this period might be seen as a time when Islam almost failed to survive. Muhammad’s prophethood during this period might be considered less than ideal since many Muslims suffered and were tortured by the Makkans.
- An alternative argument was that **this was all part of God’s plan** and time was needed to enact such a radical change. If everything is predestined by God then Muhammad’s prophethood was just as God intended and the best way to communicate the message.
- In comparison to other prophets, it might be argued that **previous prophets** were less than ideal and only Muhammad completed the messages, so he was ideal in every way.
- **Muhammad led the previous prophets in prayer**, according to traditions about his miraculous Night Journey to the Seven Heavens. This spiritual leadership reflects his suggests he had a special role as the ideal messenger.
- Responses might distinguish between **different aspects** of Muhammad’s leadership and argue that some were ideal but others less so. A **distinction might be drawn between the circumstances of prophethood and the personality of Muhammad**.
- There is **no special status for prophets in Islam** above that of ordinary people: they are not divine in any way. Muhammad’s prophethood should not be idolised or elevated in that sense. However, it could be seen as the best example which Muslims have to follow.

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

Section B

3. (a) Explain how Muslim's treatment of the Qur'an reflects its status.

[AO1 25]

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

- The Qur'an is usually kept on the **highest shelf** in the bookcase in the Muslim home. This reflects its status as the word of God and therefore the most important text in the house.
- It is not only important, but its words also have **sacred quality**, so it is considered necessary to keep it clean and free from all dust and dirt as a mark of respect to God. Often it is covered by a cloth for that reason.
- When reading the Qur'an Muslims often raise it by placing it on a **wooden stand**, so that it is not on the floor, which might be considered disrespectful. Stands can be seen by students in Islamic madrassah schools, where children learn how to read the Qur'an and recite it for their prayers.
- As God's words, they are **recited with accuracy** and beauty. If a mistake is made, another Muslim will immediately speak the correction, so that the accuracy of the word of God is maintained and no errors are made. Much time and effort are made to learn the art of recitation with a beautiful voice, because this shows the glorious status of the word of God.
- Some Muslims spend years learning the whole of the Qur'an by heart, to become **hafiz of Qur'an**. Muslims believe that this has such high status that it rewards seven generations with paradise in the afterlife.
- The Arabic text of the Qur'an is written in beautiful style, known as **calligraphy**. This decorates the high walls of mosques and is sometimes framed on display in the Muslim home. Whilst art involving pictures and animate objects is frowned upon or prohibited by Muslims, calligraphy is regarded as the highest form of art as it beautifies the best words: those revealed from God.
- The meaning of the Qur'an is **used for guidance** by Muslims. Scholars use this as the first authority from which to derive shari'a rulings in Islamic law. Often the Qur'an provides general principles which are detailed further by Muhammad's sunnah. Even where it does not provide guidance, Muslim scholars never suggest an idea which might contradict the Qur'an, as the word of God is treated as pre-eminent and supreme.

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

(b) 'Only an Arabic Qur'an can be accurate.'

Evaluate this view.

[AO2 25]

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

- There is a **concept of I'jaz** in Islamic teaching, meaning that the Qur'an cannot be imitated. It is unique. To translate it risks change. Many Muslims refer to copies of the Qur'an in different languages as interpretations rather than translations for this reason. This suggests that translations cannot be accurate.
- The Qur'an was revealed to Muhammad in Arabic. Caliph Uthman produced an **authorised version** of the Qur'an which only permitted this version to be used. Therefore, it could be said only an Arabic Qur'an is official or regarded as accurate.
- The Qur'an was written in the specific Arabic dialect of the Quraysh who lived in Makkah at the time, in **seventh century Arabia**. Therefore, any general Arabic version would not be sufficient to meet the criteria of Muslim tradition: modern Arabic might distort the meaning. Only Quraysh dialect with words identical to the original would suffice.
- In Muslim prayers, this same Qur'an in Arabic is used to this day. This means that all Muslims around the world recite in the same way. It is necessary to do so to ensure accuracy, as the **meaning of the words can change** if any difference is allowed to creep in.
- The Arabic Qur'an contains words in poetic, vocative style and words with several meanings and shades of meaning. There was also a context to the revelations. **Change in the language can lose subtleties of meaning as well as ignore context.**
- However, there are traditions that as Islam expanded, some people converted to Islam who did not know Arabic. It was said that they were **permitted to say their prayers in their own language**, including translation of part of the Qur'an, until they had learned the Arabic text. This suggests that some accuracy in translation is possible.
- Recitation without understanding risks losing meaning behind faith, so translation can be **helpful for modern Muslims and those who do not speak Arabic**. It could be argued that since translations will inevitably be made in the minds of those who speak different languages, to transfer concepts to understandable form, it is more accurate to make translations by scholars who understand the Qur'an best.
- It could be argued that translations can be **broadly accurate**, even if they can never wholly disseminate the original meaning.

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

4. (a) Explain the nature and purpose of regular daily prayers in Islam.

[AO1 25]

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

- The Qur'an 20.14 calls on Muslims to establish regular prayer. Sura 4:103 refers to 'regular' prayers at 'stated times' which are a command of God on the believer. In Sura 17:78 God commands Muslims to establish regular prayers at set times according to the daily cycle of the sun. The purpose of prayers, then, is **to obey God's revealed command**.
- Muhammad showed Muslims how to pray in a set routine. Muhammad's example is a model for Muslims to follow. The purpose of the prayers is to **follow Muhammad** and their nature follows the pattern of his example.
- **Prayers follow a set sequence called a rakah**. This begins by making the intention to pray to God (niyyah). Then a Muslim stands, facing the direction of the qiblah in Makkah, in unison with all other Muslims around the world. During standing, a Muslim recites Sura Fatiah in Arabic, the opening Sura of the Qur'an. This reminds them of the words of God and the main teachings of Islam, to follow the straight path of God's guidance.
- **A focus on God** is made through the actions. After standing, Muslims bow to the position of ruku, putting behind themselves all other concerns. Then they prostrate to the floor in sujud, placing their forehead on the ground in complete submission to their creator.
- Following that, worshippers take a sitting position (tashahud), and make a **declaration of the shahadah**, the statement of faith. This reaffirms their belief in God alone and Muhammad as God's prophet. The prayer ends with the Salam, a greeting to those on each side, and personal du'a requests to God.
- The **set times of prayer** are fajr, before dawn; dhur/zuhur, midday; asr, mid-afternoon; maghrib after sunset and isha after nightfall. This shows that prayer reminds Muslims of God throughout the day and develops a sense of God-consciousness, known as taqwa. Worshipping God becomes central to the life of a Muslim.
- Muslims may pray in order to fulfil the Five Pillars so that they can face **judgement in the afterlife** with confidence. They believe that they will be judged by God and have the opportunity of eternal life in paradise, dependent on their actions and the intentions behind them in their world life, which is a test from God. In this way, the purpose of prayer is to achieve paradise in the future.

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

(b) 'Prayer is much more than a ritual for Muslims.'

Evaluate this view.

[AO2 25]

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

- **Prayer follows the ritualistic pattern** of a rakah, with set movements and following a sequence, repeated in the same way at every prayer. This suggests the whole focus of the prayer is ritual.
- Indeed, prayer **follows Muhammad's sunnah**. His example is seen as a perfect one for Muslims to copy, and this shows them how to follow the will of God. By following his actions Muslims are completing the ritual in the best way possible. It is seen as a requirement to submit to God and follow Muhammad, rather than make individual expression.
- Any change to the routine would be considered an **innovation, bidah**, which is forbidden in Islam. Muslims should try to avoid adding anything extra or changing what was decreed by God.
- The **niyat is the intention to pray**, made individually by Muslims quietly at the start of each prayer. Although this is required, it might be considered separate from the ritual, as personal understanding and commitment it required in the mind of the believer.
- It is said that all **actions are judged by their intention**. Therefore, the ritual of prayer might be considered less important than the intention. For a person who is ill and unable to make all of the ritualistic actions, they could still make their intentions clear to God. In many mosques, chairs are available for the elderly who have difficulty bowing, which shows that it is effort that counts more than exact duplication of each part of the ritual.
- There is a risk that **ritual becomes mechanical**, and that closeness to God is therefore more important and needs to be stressed as a feature of prayer, so that worshippers can gain the most out of it and develop their faith and commitment as a result.
- A Muslim might become closer to God in prayer through making additional prayers, personal prayers of du'a after the main salah, through prayer at night tahajjud, and other, Sufi prayers, developing their relationship in deeper ways.
- Discussion of the words '**much more**' might raise that they suggest that ritual is less important. It could be argued that ritual is most important, but there are additional aspects of prayer. These might be considered integral to the ritual or separate aspects.

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

5. (a) Explain how Ramadan benefits a Muslim's relationship with God.

[AO1 25]

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

- **Ramadan** is the act of fasting from before dawn to sunset, over the 29 or 30 days of the Islamic month of Ramadan. Muslims also abstain from sexual activity, try to avoid bad language and make a special effort to complete all their obligations such as daily prayers.
- **Fasting is an act of obedience.** Muslims show their submission to God without question. This is despite all the temptations of food around them, which they must refrain from all day long. This strengthens their resolve to submit to the commands of God and to complete all of the commands God asks of Muslims, especially the Five Pillars of Islam, of which fasting is one.
- **Ramadan can help a Muslim to make a fresh start.** Muslims can ask God for forgiveness in prayer for their shortcomings and wrongdoings in the year gone. The fresh start can enable them to put such matters behind them. They feel that forgiveness is their reward for completing the fast and can gain strength from the ummah who are also fasting with a focus on God.
- **Additional night tarawih prayers** are said to read the whole of the Qur'an. The Qur'an is considered the directly revealed word of God, so reading it during Ramadan draws a Muslim closer to God's word. This is believed to have a spiritual quality in itself. The messages contained therein may be explained and taught or read about during Ramadan, bringing the meaning and message of the Qur'an closer into focus in the mind of the believer.
- The first revelation on the **Night of Power** is marked on the 27th night of Ramadan, when Muslims stay up to say personal prayers to God, putting their requests to him for the year ahead. This strengthens the personal relationship between a believer and God, but also draws a person emotionally closer to God.
- **I'tikaf or retreat** is held by some during the last ten days of Ramadan. This enables a Muslim to spend time in prayer, solitude and contemplation, carrying out additional acts of worship and reading the Qur'an. Through this, Muslims can get closer to God.

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

(b) 'Ramadan benefits the community more than individuals.'

Evaluate this view.

[AO2 25]

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

- During Ramadan, individual Muslims are tested to complete a month of fasting. This should help them to **develop their personal relationship** with God, and gain strength in their faith and practice. This suggests Ramadan benefits individuals more and can help a person become more personally committed to their faith.
- Furthermore, **fasting is a personal test** because no one can see what a Muslim does when others are not around. The reward is expected in heaven in the afterlife. God's judgement is applied to each individual, independently of others around. Therefore, the rewards of Ramadan should be considered individual.
- However, it could be said that **Ramadan is more a source of strength for Muslim communities**. This is a time of year when Muslims come together daily for additional prayers and can develop brotherhood and strength with each other, as they discuss matters and share iftar meals together at the end of a day fasting.
- The community can benefit through more involvement in **local mosques**. Attendance is often greater and more become involved with helping out. Messages and notices can be more easily disseminated and links made.
- **Charitable campaigns** and giving can be organised, which have practical benefit to people in need. Zakah payments are organised and other charitable causes supported through giving additional payments of Sadaqah. These may be allocated to Muslims in need in other countries or in the local community, enabling them to have sufficient food or to gain funds to further their education, thus giving practical benefits to the wider community.
- It might be argued that **Ramadan is about obedience rather than benefit**. It should not be seen for material gain or even spiritual reward, because only God makes that decision. Individuals make their personal intention at the start of each day of fasting to complete the fast for God alone, and do not make any comment about doing so for personal benefit.
- The **focus of the statement** could be discussed: there might be community and individual benefits but that is not the main point of Ramadan, because the main reason is to obey God. Benefits could be seen as incidental to this.

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