



Rewarding Learning

**ADVANCED SUBSIDIARY (AS)
General Certificate of Education
2025**

Religious Studies

Assessment Unit AS 6

assessing

An Introduction to Islam

[SRE61]

THURSDAY 29 MAY, MORNING

**MARK
SCHEME**

General Marking Instructions

Introduction

The main purpose of a mark scheme is to ensure that examinations are marked accurately, consistently and fairly. The mark scheme provides examiners with an indication of the nature and range of candidates' responses likely to be worthy of credit. It also sets out the criteria which they should apply in allocating marks to candidates' responses.

Assessment objectives

Below are the assessment objectives for **GCE Religious Studies**

Candidates should be able to:

- demonstrate knowledge and understanding of religion, including:
 - religious, philosophical and/or ethical thought and teaching;
 - influence of beliefs, teachings and practices on individuals, communities and societies;
 - cause and significance of similarities and differences in belief, teaching and practice; and
 - approaches to the study of religion and belief (AO1); and
- analyse and evaluate aspects of, and approaches to, religion and belief, including their significance, influence and study (AO2).

Quality of candidates' responses

In marking the examination papers, examiners should be looking for a quality of response reflecting the level of maturity which may reasonably be expected of a 17 or 18-year-old which is the age at which the majority of candidates sit their GCE examinations.

Flexibility in marking

Mark schemes are not intended to be totally prescriptive. No mark scheme can cover all the responses which candidates may produce. In the event of unanticipated answers, examiners are expected to use their professional judgement to assess the validity of answers. If an answer is particularly problematic, then examiners should seek the guidance of the Supervising Examiner.

Positive marking

Examiners are encouraged to be positive in their marking, giving appropriate credit for what candidates know, understand and can do rather than penalising candidates for errors or omissions. Examiners should make use of the whole of the available mark range for any particular question and be prepared to award full marks for a response which is as good as might reasonably be expected of a 17 or 18-year-old GCE candidate.

Awarding zero marks

Marks should only be awarded for valid responses and no marks should be awarded for an answer which is completely incorrect or inappropriate.

Mark schemes for tasks or questions which require candidates to respond in extended written form are marked on the basis of levels of response which take account of the quality of written communication.

Levels of response

In deciding which level of response to award, examiners should look for the 'best fit' bearing in mind that weakness in one area may be compensated for by strength in another. In deciding which mark within a particular level to award to any response, examiners are expected to use their professional judgement. The following guidance is provided to assist examiners.

- **Threshold performance:** Response which just merits inclusion in the level and should be awarded a mark at or near the bottom of the range.
- **Intermediate performance:** Response which clearly merits inclusion in the level and should be awarded a mark at or near the middle of the range.
- **High performance:** Response which fully satisfies the level description and should be awarded a mark at or near the top of the range.

Each of the two assessment objectives have been categorised into five levels of performance relating to the respective abilities of the candidates. Having identified, for each assessment objective, the band in which the candidate has performed, the examiner should then decide on the appropriate mark within the range for the band.

Other Aspects of Human Experience at AS Level

Candidates must engage with other aspects of human experience, when required, to access Bands 3–5.

Synoptic Assessment at A2 Level

Candidates must support their answer with reference to at least one other unit of study to access Bands 4–5.

Candidates must engage with other aspects of human experience in their AO2 response to access Bands 3–5.

Quality of written communication

Quality of written communication is taken into account in assessing candidates' responses to all tasks and questions that require them to respond in extended written form. These tasks and questions are marked on the basis of levels of response. The description for each level of response includes reference to the quality of written communication.

For conciseness, quality of written communication is distinguished within levels of response as follows:

- Level 1: Quality of written communication is basic.
- Level 2: Quality of written communication is limited.
- Level 3: Quality of written communication is good.
- Level 4: Quality of written communication is very good.
- Level 5: Quality of written communication is excellent.

In interpreting these level descriptions, examiners should refer to the more detailed guidance provided below:

Level 1 (Basic): The candidate makes only a basic selection and use of an appropriate form and style of writing. The organisation of material lacks clarity and coherence. There is little or no use of specialist vocabulary. Presentation, spelling, punctuation and grammar are basic and the intended meaning is not clear.

Level 2 (Limited): The candidate makes a limited selection and use of an appropriate form and style of writing. The organisation of material may lack clarity and coherence. There is limited use of specialist vocabulary. Presentation, spelling, punctuation and grammar may be such that intended meaning is not clear.

Level 3 (Good): The candidate makes a reasonable selection and use of an appropriate form and style of writing. Relevant material is organised with some clarity and coherence. There is good use of appropriate specialist vocabulary. Presentation, spelling, punctuation and grammar are sufficiently competent to make meaning clear.

Level 4 (Very Good): The candidate makes a very good selection and use of an appropriate form and style of writing. Relevant material is organised with clarity and coherence. There is very good use of appropriate specialist vocabulary. Presentation, spelling, punctuation and grammar are of a very good standard to make meaning clear.

Level 5 (Excellent): The candidate successfully selects and uses the most appropriate form and style of writing. Relevant material is organised with a high degree of clarity and coherence. There is widespread and accurate use of appropriate specialist vocabulary. Presentation, spelling, punctuation and grammar are of a sufficiently high standard to make meaning clear.

Band	AO1 Performance Descriptors	Marks
5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An excellent response to the question asked • Demonstrates comprehensive understanding and knowledge • Demonstrates a comprehensive understanding of the influence of beliefs, teachings and practices on individuals, communities and societies • A very high degree of relevant evidence and examples • A sophisticated answer with a clear and coherent structure • An extensive range of technical language and vocabulary with accurate use of spelling, punctuation and grammar 	[21]–[25]
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A very good response to the question asked • Demonstrates a high degree of understanding and almost totally accurate knowledge • Demonstrates a high degree of understanding of the influence of beliefs, teachings and practices on individuals, communities and societies • A very good range of relevant evidence and examples • A mature answer with a mainly clear and coherent structure • A very good use of technical language and vocabulary with a mainly accurate use of spelling, punctuation and grammar 	[16]–[20]
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A good response to the question asked • Demonstrates a reasonable degree of understanding and mainly accurate knowledge • Demonstrates a reasonable degree of understanding of the influence of beliefs, teachings and practices on individuals, communities and societies • A good range of relevant evidence and examples • A reasonably mature answer with some evidence of structure and coherence • A good use of technical language and vocabulary with a reasonably accurate use of spelling, punctuation and grammar 	[11]–[15]
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A limited response to the question asked • Demonstrates limited knowledge and understanding • Demonstrates limited understanding of the influence of beliefs, teachings and practices on individuals, communities and societies • A limited range of evidence and/or examples • A limited answer with limited evidence of structure and coherence • A limited use of technical language and vocabulary with a limited command of spelling, punctuation and grammar 	[6]–[10]
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A basic response to the question asked • Demonstrates minimal knowledge and understanding • Demonstrates minimal understanding of the influence of beliefs, teachings and practices on individuals, communities and societies • Little, if any, use of evidence and/or examples • A basic answer with basic structure and coherence • A basic use of technical language and vocabulary with a poor grasp of spelling, punctuation and grammar 	[0]–[5]

Band	AO2 Performance Descriptors	Marks
5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A comprehensive and coherent response demonstrating an excellent attempt at critical analysis • An excellent attempt at the application of beliefs, values and teachings to the question asked • An excellent attempt using evidence and reasoning to construct well informed and balanced arguments which are set, where necessary, in the context of other aspects of human experience • An excellent attempt at providing personal insight and independent thought • A sophisticated answer with a clear and coherent structure • An extensive range of technical language and terminology with accurate use of spelling, punctuation and grammar 	[21]–[25]
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A very good response demonstrating a very good attempt at critical analysis • A very good attempt at the application of beliefs, values and teachings to the question asked • A very good attempt using evidence and reasoning to construct well informed and balanced arguments which are set, where necessary, in the context of other aspects of human experience • A very good attempt at providing personal insight and independent thought • A mature answer with a mainly clear and coherent structure • A very good use of technical language and vocabulary with a mainly accurate use of spelling, punctuation and grammar 	[16]–[20]
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A reasonable response demonstrating a good attempt at critical analysis • A good attempt at the application of beliefs, values and teachings to the question asked • A good attempt using evidence and reasoning to construct well informed and balanced arguments which are set, where necessary, in the context of other aspects of human experience • A good attempt at providing personal insight and independent thought • A reasonably mature answer with some evidence of structure and coherence • A good use of technical language and vocabulary with a reasonably accurate use of spelling, punctuation and grammar 	[11]–[15]
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A limited response demonstrating a modest attempt at critical analysis • A limited attempt at the application of beliefs, values and teachings to the question asked • A limited attempt using evidence and reasoning to construct well informed and balanced arguments which struggle to relate, where necessary, to other aspects of human experience • A limited attempt at providing personal insight and independent thought • A limited answer with limited evidence of structure and coherence • A limited use of technical language and vocabulary with a limited command of spelling, punctuation and grammar 	[6]–[10]

Band	AO2 Performance Descriptors	Marks
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A basic response demonstrating little attempt at critical analysis • A basic attempt at the application of beliefs, values and teachings to the question asked • A basic attempt using evidence and reasoning to construct well informed and balanced arguments which fail to relate, where necessary, to other aspects of human experience • A basic attempt at providing personal insight and independent thought • A basic answer with basic structure and coherence • A basic use of technical language and vocabulary with a poor grasp of spelling, punctuation and grammar 	[0]–[5]

Candidates must engage with other aspects of human experience, where necessary, to access Bands 3–5.

Section A

Answer **one** question from Section A.

AVAILABLE
MARKS

- 1 (a) Discuss the style of the Surahs from Mecca and Medina and how they are arranged in the Qur'an.

Answers may include:

- Evidence of focus on the question and referring to Surahs from Mecca and Medina.
- It is suggested that two thirds of the Surahs may be from the Meccan period and one third from the Medinan period.
- It is generally accepted that the shorter more striking Surahs may come from the Meccan period.
- Consideration of how the authentic Qur'an is in the language in which it was revealed, Arabic and must remain in Arabic. The implications of this for the Muslim community.
- The tone of the language in the Meccan Surahs is fiery, the style is rhythmic and rhetorical.
- The Meccan Surahs are often addressed to Muhammad but he is rarely the subject of them.
- The Meccan Surahs have a prophetic character dealing with the sinfulness of the people, a call to moral living, judgement, heaven and hell, Muhammad is a warner, the oneness of Allah is stressed and the sin of idolatry/shirk addressed, the command to prostrate is regular, reference to Adam and Satan (Iblis), reference to previous prophets.
- The later Meccan Surahs seem to focus on idolatry, the unity of God and the word Allah is used more regularly, the word 'never' is evident.
- The Medinan Surahs are longer, prosaic, slower, rhyme is harder to detect.
- The later Medinan Surahs seem to focus on Muhammad himself to a greater extent, the final apostle and messenger, a community leader and they are addressed to his followers.
- The Medinan Surahs deal with the laws of Islam, marriage, divorce, inheritance and punishment, orphans, wine, gambling, jihad, criticism of Christians and the Jewish community, 'the People of the Book'.
- Identifying the Surahs which are from Mecca or Medina is challenging as they are not in chronological order but order of length.
- Consideration of the structure of the Qur'an, it has 114 chapters, apart from Surah 1 the Surahs are organised in order of length from the longest to the shortest, the Qur'an is not in chronological order.

Accept valid alternatives

Mark in levels

(AO1)

[25]

(b) "The Qur'an, Sunnah and Hadith are all equally important sources of authority in Islam." Assess this claim. Justify your answer.

AVAILABLE
MARKS

Answers may include:

- Evidence of addressing the question.
- Consideration of the importance of the Qur'an, the final, uncorrupted, perfect word of Allah.
- The Qur'an is held in the highest regard, one must prepare oneself to read it by washing. It is the highest authority within Islam.
- Consideration of the significance of the Sunnah collections which provide the example of the prophet Muhammad, who lived out the Qur'an.
- Consideration of the significance of the Hadith collections which provide the teachings of the prophet Muhammad.
- Consideration of how both of these add to the Qur'an as sources of guidance and authority for Muslims.
- Each of these sources assist Muslims to submit to Allah and to follow the clear straight path (Shariah).
- The Qur'an, the Sunnah and Hadith do bring unity and continuity to the Islamic community and enable its survival.
- Consideration of the extent to which the Qur'an, Sunnah and Hadith can be considered to be 'equally' important. The Qur'an always takes priority and the Prophet Muhammad always stressed this.
- Consideration of difficulties presented by these additional sources of authority, e.g. their reliability, the huge volume of material available in the Hadith collections, some Hadith collections considered to hold greater authority.
- Consideration of other aspects of the Islamic faith which are significant authorities in interpreting and applying the Qur'an, Sunnah and Hadith, e.g. the family, the ummah, the Imam and the mosque.

Accept valid alternatives

Mark in levels

(AO2)

[25]

50

2 (a) For what reasons does Muhammad continue to be important within the Islamic community?

AVAILABLE
MARKS

Answers may include:

- Evidence of focusing on the question and 'importance' in particular.
- Consideration of how Muhammad was called by Allah to be a prophet.
- Consideration of the line of the prophets who had come before him, but the message they were given was corrupted.
- Consideration of how Muhammad was the final prophet, or Seal, who was the means of the Qur'an being fully and perfectly revealed.
- Consideration of how Muhammad was bringing back the ancient religion of Islam.
- Consideration of how the Qur'an was revealed through Muhammad and was his miracle, it was the dictated word of Allah.
- Consideration of how the Qur'an offers Muslims all of their key beliefs and religious duties, the Five Pillars, therefore they can live as vice regents.
- Consideration of how salvation came through the Qur'an and Muhammad, so that Muslims can go to Paradise in the afterlife.
- Consideration of the leadership Muhammad offered when setting up the Islamic community in Medina, Mecca and Arabia.
- Consideration of the view that Muhammad was the perfect example, his life was the Qur'an. Muslims can learn from him.
- Consideration of how Muslims can learn from the words and example of Muhammad in the Hadith and Sunnah.
- Consideration of how Muhammad is imitated, remembered and honoured, e.g. during Hajj, festivals, the Pillars.
- Consideration of how the prophet Muhammad had a unifying and inspiring impact when he was alive and he still does.

Accept valid alternatives

Mark in levels

(AO1)

[25]

(b) Evaluate the view that Muhammad had more successes than hardships in his life. Justify your answer.

AVAILABLE
MARKS

Answers may include:

- Evidence of focusing on the question.
- Consideration of challenging aspects of Muhammad's life which could be seen as hardships.
- The hardships Muhammad experienced in his early life, e.g. the death of his parents and his grandfather. The deaths of his two male children.
- The hardship of being rejected by his own people when he preached about his Islamic beliefs in Mecca, the persecution he and his followers had to cope with, the boycott of his tribe because of him.
- The hardship of being told he could no longer preach in Mecca, going outside the city, being stoned at Ta'if.
- The struggles presented in Medina, trying to deal with warring tribes, finding ways to cope with rejection from the Jewish community.
- Consideration of the hardships related to the ongoing threat of Mecca and having to engage in three battles, being injured in the Battle of Uhud.
- Consideration of aspects of Muhammad's life which could be seen as successes.
- Muhammad had a happy marriage to Khadijah, she and her cousin Waraqa were very supportive.
- Muhammad did have converts in Mecca and impressed many men from Yathrib who signed the two Pledges of Aqaba to show their support of Muhammad.
- After the Hijra, Muhammad was accepted as a spiritual and political leader which was his vision.
- He successfully defended the faith and Medina in the three battles (Bad'r, Uhud, the Trenches). This prepared the way for conquering Mecca and Arabia.
- Muhammad received visions to comfort and strengthen him when he was going through challenging times. The Night Journey showed him how all the prophets before him had to suffer too, it was part of being a prophet and God had a plan for him.

Accept valid alternatives

Mark in levels

(AO2)

[25]

50

Section B

AVAILABLE
MARKS

Answer **one** question from Section B.

3 (a) Explain why Salat is central to Islamic life and worship.

Answers may include:

- Consideration of the importance of Salat.
- Consideration of the centrality of Salat on life and worship.
- Salat is one of the Five Pillars of Islam, it is a religious duty, it is central to Islamic spirituality.
- Consideration of the Islamic view of the afterlife and how obedience leads to Paradise.
- Consideration of the symbolic and personal significance of performing wudu before prayer, symbolic cleansing before coming into the presence of Allah.
- Consideration of carrying out the rakah and how it shows in a physical and symbolic way that one is submitted to Allah.
- Consideration of the impact on an individual's faith, of thinking of Allah and praying to him five times per day.
- Salat reminds Muslims of Allah's oneness (Tawhid) through the Adhan and their prayers as they recite the Shahadah as part of their prayer ritual.
- Consideration of the impact on someone's outlook and moral behaviour when Allah is kept at the forefront of your mind through Salat.
- Consideration of family involvement in Salat in the home.
- Consideration of the importance of Salat-ul-Jumu'ah in the mosque for the individual Muslim and how it creates a sense of ummah (community) and collective prayer and faith.
- Consideration of how the centrality of Salat-ul-Jumu'ah could be enhanced for the individual and the community by the mosque, e.g. fountain for wudu, the bare floor and carpets which enable collective Salat and Du'a, the mihrab which indicates the direction of Mecca, the Imam who leads prayer and also teaches the community.
- Consideration of the significance of Salat-ul-Jumu'ah when the Qur'an is recited and the rakah is performed in unison.
- Consideration of how the centrality of Salat-ul-Jumu'ah could be different for women who are separated from the men, either behind the men or in a separate place. Perhaps, a more individualistic experience for women.

Accept valid alternatives

Mark in levels

(AO1)

[25]

- (b) “The idea of religious duty appears outdated, but is still important.”
With reference to other aspects of human experience, evaluate this view.
Justify your answer.

Answers may include:

- Reference should be made to other aspects of human experience.
- Consideration of examples of what ‘religious duties’ could mean, e.g. prayer, fasting, giving money, putting the needs of others before your own, confession, attendance at worship.
- Consideration of how clear religious duties help people to identify who is a member of their group or faith.
- Consideration of how having a clear idea of what your religious duties are may help people to feel that they are obeying the teachings of their religion, brings comfort and reassurance.
- Consideration of the importance of religious duties for an individual, e.g. personal prayer, collective worship, giving to those in need.
- Consideration of the possibility that religious groups do not necessarily agree on religious duties within their religion, it could cause confusion and conflict.
- Religious duty as a way of passing the faith onto the next generation, e.g. Judaism.
- Religious duty may occur due to tradition.
- Consideration of how the idea of ‘duty’ can seem outdated or old fashioned and unnecessary in the modern world.
- Consideration of how society has changed and due to individualism people tend to select what suits them, may resist feeling burdened by doing their duty.
- Consideration of how religious groups or organisations may create what they see as a duty and bring pressure to believers.
- Consideration of different interpretations of religious texts and understanding of religious duties.
- Consideration of how the modern world relies on the internet and social media for collective worship and religious teaching, this could impact the idea of ‘religious duties’.
- Consideration of how other things may be more helpful and supportive to believers in the modern world, e.g. their family, their religious community, their religious leaders, collective worship, organisations outside of their religious community, their sacred text.
- Consideration of how motivation to love and worship God is not about having to do anything, but is a genuine response towards God and others.
- Consideration of how the idea of having to do your duty could be very off putting for believers and could cause them to lose their faith.
- The conflict between duty and conscience.

Accept valid alternatives

Mark in levels

Candidates must engage with other aspects of human experience to access Bands 3–5.

(AO2)

[25]

AVAILABLE
MARKS

50

4 (a) For what reasons is the Mosque significant for Muslims?

AVAILABLE
MARKS

Answers may include:

- A clear attempt to address the question and significance in particular.
- Consideration of the example of Muhammad who established and attended the first mosque in Medina.
- Consideration of how some features of the mosque help Muslims to prepare for worship, e.g. the call to prayer, performing wudu, taking shoes off.
- Consideration of how some features of the mosque may help Muslims to pray, e.g. the Imam's leadership, reciting the Qur'an, performing the rakah.
- Consideration of how the Imam may help Muslims to grow in their faith, e.g. through the Khutbah on Friday or additional talks or classes.
- Consideration of how the mosque may be a place for children to be educated about their faith and learning Arabic in order to read the Qur'an.
- Consideration of how the mosque can be a place for special times, e.g. Islamic festivals, Islamic death rituals.
- Consideration of how the mosque can be a place for the Muslim community to meet up, or to enjoy socialising.
- Consideration of how the mosque can be a place for counselling and pastoral care.
- Consideration of the extent to which women and children are present in a mosque, somewhere separate or to the back or side of the mosque or in a women only mosque.
- Consideration of how the mosque can give Muslims a real sense of unity or ummah.
- Consideration of the view that any place can be a mosque or a place to prostrate.

Accept valid alternatives

Mark in levels

(AO1)

[25]

(b) “Observing religious ritual and living in a moral way are always influenced by context.”

With reference to other aspects of human experience, assess this claim. Justify your answer.

Answers may include:

- Reference should be made to other aspects of human experience.
- Clear focus on religious ritual and moral living, consideration of ‘context’, e.g. historical, geographical, social.
- Consideration of places where there could be religious persecution and believers could be in serious danger if they show their faith publicly, e.g. the Jewish community during World War 2, persecution in North Korea, Sudan, China.
- Consideration of how living in a secular or pluralist society may make it difficult for believers to take a moral stance, e.g. slavery, relationships, sexuality, abortion.
- Consideration of how living in a secular or pluralist society may make it difficult for believers to observe religious rituals, e.g. observing a day of rest if Jewish or Christian, celebrating festivals, the acceptability of sending cards or putting up decorations.
- Consideration of how believers could be tempted to keep their faith secret to avoid embarrassment.
- Consideration of how some people may feel serious pressure from their family, religious community or their society to conform to their expectations of rituals or moral living.
- Consideration of how there may be different levels of religious commitment. Those who are highly committed will continue to observe religious rituals and stay true to their moral values regardless of their context or how difficult or risky it is.
- Consideration of how loving and obeying God may be a priority because it leads to eternal reward, so context is less significant.
- Consideration of how beliefs, moral views and rituals are often based in a sacred text, or the word of God, which motivates believers. This is more important than your context.
- Consideration of whether or not your context is the major challenge for believers.
- Consideration of how religious texts are rooted in a particular context which could be very different to the modern world, so some may feel they are not relevant in relation to rituals or moral values.
- Consideration of the consequences of not fulfilling religious rituals or making moral choices, e.g. punishment from God or exclusion from the religious community.
- Consideration of different ways of interpreting and applying a religious text, e.g. conservative or more liberal.
- Consideration of other factors which could be more important in relation to religious rituals and moral living, e.g. religious leaders, religious establishments, television, the internet, social media, personal religious experiences.

Accept valid alternatives

Mark in levels

Candidates must engage with other aspects of human experience to access Bands 3–5.

(AO2)

[25]

Total

**AVAILABLE
MARKS**

50

100