

GCE



CCEA GCE A2  
Exemplifying Examination  
Performance  
**Religious Studies**

**A2 6: Islam in a  
Contemporary Context**

This is an exemplification of candidates' performance in GCE A2 examinations (Summer 2018) to support the teaching and learning of the Religious Studies specification.



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# EXEMPLIFYING EXAMINATION PERFORMANCE

## GCE Religious Studies

### Introduction

These materials illustrate aspects of performance from the 2018 summer A2 examination series of CCEA's revised GCE Specification in 2016.

Students' grade A responses are reproduced verbatim and accompanied by commentaries written by senior examiners. The commentaries draw attention to the strengths of the students' responses and indicate, where appropriate, deficiencies and how improvements could be made.

It is intended that the materials should provide a benchmark of candidate performance and help teachers and students to raise standards.

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Best wishes

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Donna Finlay". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'D' and a long, sweeping tail on the 'y'.

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**GCE: A2 Religious Studies**

**ARE61: Islam in a  
Contemporary Context**

**Grade: A Exemplar**



## Section A

**Q1a** With reference to relevant Surahs, discuss what the Qur'an teaches about angels. [20]

### Student's response

*In the Quran we learn how God appointed Adam as his vice regent, meaning that it is Adams responsibility to care for all of Gods creation. Modern muslims view this as their task as well. We also learn through the Quran with regards to Allah's 99 names (such as "The Internal") that God cannot directly communicate with us and so he sent his angels and prophets to deliver his message.*

*In the Quran there are many characteristics of angels listed. It is believed that they were Gods first creation and have no free will so can freely pass through his kingdom and in his presence. All of Allahs angels are male. They have no sex and all have wings. They are said to be made of Gods own light.*

*There are many different angels who fulfill many different roles. The Chief angel is Jibrail. He is thought to be the same angel as Gabriel in Christianity. Jibrail is responsible for delivering all of Gods messages to his desired prophets such as Ibrahim and indeed Muhammad. Surah 96 is said to be a direct translation of the words Jibrail said in Muhammads mind suitably referred to as "The Clot".*

*Other angels are those such as Mikail who is responsible for guarding al Jannah and keeping Shayton out of Gods kingdom. Other angels include the likes of Israfil and Izrail, two angels directly involved in Akirah, with Israfil responsible for sounding the trumpet and Izrail, angel of death, responsible for taking the last breath of humans. It is also believed by some that Izrail visits the soul during Barzakh and has a discussion about the persons faith.*

*There has been debate over Iblis. Iblis is Islams version of the devil but unlike Christianitys version, is not a directly opposing force to Allah. Instead Iblis was only able to tempt humans due to the power given to him by God. Iblis was cast out of Allahs reverance when he refused to bow down to Adam, claiming that Adam was but clay whereas he himself was made of Gods own fire. It is debated whether or not Iblis was truly an angel as he claims to be made of fire and also possessed the free will to refuse Gods request. It is argued that he was a Jinn, creatures created from Gods "smokeless fire", Jinn have free will and will still face punishment as it is believed Iblis will too.*

*It is the role of angels to give the prophets their message to their generations although the message delivered to Muhammad by Jibrail is said to be the last of Gods messages. This explains why there has been no newly formed religions since Islam.*

*To conclude, Angels play a vital role in Gods kingdom from ensuring this message to humanity is kept, to safeguarding Heaven, to recording the lives of humans. The most important angel in Islam is Jibrail, for he delivered the final message to the Great Prophet. Angels play a huge role in Islam and can be the cause of conflict as well as peace.*

### **Examiner's comments**

The candidate directly targets the question throughout their response. They demonstrate highly detailed knowledge and understanding of angels in general and specific angels. They have made reference to the teaching of the Qur'an at a number of points and have referred to one specific Surah, which again targets the question. Perhaps there could have been more direct references made. In relation to 'discussion', the candidate demonstrates the ability to engage in analysis when discussing Iblis, the source of his power, was he truly an angel, whether he is made of fire, and whether or not he has free will. There are also comments which show that there is a real understanding of the significance of angels within Islamic faith and theology. A coherent and quite comprehensive response.

Band 5

**Q1b** Critically assess the view that the Articles of Faith present Allah only as a merciful God. [30]

### Student's response

*The foundation of Islam is the worship of Allah. Throughout Islam God is presented as having many different Qualities. There are those who argue that through the Articles of faith Allah is only presented as a merciful God.*

*Those who argue that God is only presented as a merciful God will point to the names of Allah, such as that of 'the most forgiving'. They also point to the fact that Allah bestows justice upon those who need it. Another argument for how merciful God is through a quote from Muhammad which states "For all diseases Allah has created a cure except death So oh Children of Adam, seek cure for your ailments". This shows how Allah is merciful with regards to sickness in that there is always a cure. There is also a point in that many believe that upon judgement, Allah will try to intercede for those who have tried to live good lives and is merciful in the sense that he has created All Jannah, a place of the blessed. Allah also forgave Adam after he was tempted by the devil.*

*However there are those who argue that the articles of faith present Allah in different lights. There is the simple fact of the 99 names of Allah. In the Quran, whilst he is presented as merciful, he is also presented as All knowing, The Designer, The Powerful. These clearly highlights other key aspects of Allah such as his Creativity and his Omnipotence. Whilst these are other qualities than that of being merciful they are all viewed as painting the picture of a nice God. However there are those who would further argue that the Articles of faith also present God in a negative light. With regards to Risalah, we learn how Allah did not forgive Iblis, one of his own creations, for not bowing to Adam and instead cast him out. In some versions God even deformed Iblis for his sin. As well as that, he presents his prophets with many hardships such as Ibrahim who was tested by God about his faith, seeing if he could kill his own son in the name of God. Other hardships include the persecution Muhammad faced when he initially spoke Allahs word. This indicates that Allah is only concerned with his own needs.*

*Another argument is that with regards to Akirah, god allows people to be punished horribly in Jahannann and the very creation of this place does not indicate mercy. The notion of Al Qadr also brings to question Gods intention as if humans have no choice why are we being punished? This relates only to the notion of a harsh Allah but if God is omniscient then why does he not prevent tragedies? This does not indicate mercy.*

*Another final argument is in Tawhid, a few of Gods names are "the humiliater". Once more this does not indicate mercy and the fact that there is such quotes such as "admonish them, forsake them in beds apart and beat them" in a book purely of Allahs word does not indicate mercy.*

*To conclude whilst Allah is merciful he is also depicted as otherwise.*

## Examiner's comments

The candidate demonstrates an excellent attempt at critical analysis throughout their response. They have selected a considerable range of evidence to defend the claim and also challenge the claim that Allah is presented as merciful. The skill of looking at a diversity of arguments is desired at A2 and they have demonstrated this capability. They have also been very skillful in using their words to show that they are creating an argument and to make their point very clear. The candidate has successfully drawn evidence and arguments from the Articles of Faith, as identified in the question. There is a quality of sophistication throughout the whole response.

Band 5

**Q2a** Analyse the distinctive features of Shia Islam. [20]

### Student's response

*The Shi'a split occurred after the death of Muhammad and the question of who would succeed him was raised. The Shi'a's believed Ali, Muhammad's son-in-law was the rightful successor and that he had been appointed by Muhammad on their return from Mecca. However, 3 other caliphs were chosen before Ali which Shi'a's view as interlopers.*

*Overall, 10% of Muslims are Shi'a and they can also be known as the Party of Ali. Their main belief is that the 12<sup>th</sup> (or 7<sup>th</sup> or 5<sup>th</sup> dependent on which Shi'a sect) Imam has been hidden away and will return on the Last Day. They believe Allah is that however is leading is in contact with the hidden Imam and can add to the Qur'an/Hadith with new revelations and teachings.*

*Shi'a Muslims still follow the 5 Pillars of Islam, however, with slight changes. They add "and Ali is his friend", to the end of the Shahadah, pray only 3 times a day in Salah and ensure their heads touch dirt or the ground. With Sawm, they fast a little longer than Sunni Muslim's; until sunset. Shi'a Muslims will also pay an extra 20% Zakat which is collected by their leader. Finally, in Hajj, they walk an extra circle of the Ka'ba and also visit Karbala to commemorate Husayn's battle against Yazid.*

*With regards to the Articles of faith, Shi'a's believe the Tawhid or the oneness of God is wrong and no physical attributes can be given to Allah. They also hold 2 additional festivals that act out Ali and the success of the the Battle of Camel and Husayn's death in the Battle of Karbala, with blood letting.*

*With regards to law, Shi'a's have added some other rules such as being able to marry a woman for sexual relations and then to divorce so as not to commit adultery. They also follow 5 Hadiths and maintain that women are equal in all ceremonies and functions. The Sunni/Shi'a split has left a long effect of the faith of Islam.*

### Examiner's comments

The response targets the question throughout. The candidate deals with the Shia attitude to the leadership of the Islamic community and the split which occurred due to Ali's family being overlooked. The response also deals with distinctive practices and refers to specific differences in relation to the Pillars. There is clear analysis of distinctive beliefs of the Shia and how they have adjusted the Articles of Faith. The response also deals with different views of Shia law and the legacy of Islam. The candidate has handled the task in a comprehensive way and shown knowledge and understanding. Perhaps there could have been more analytical comments to access the upper marks in Band 5.

Band 5

**Q2b** “Muhammad’s death led to a major division in Islam which created a bitter and violent legacy.”

Critically evaluate this statement. [30]

### Student’s response

*I agree with the statement “Muhammad’s death led to a major division in Islam which created a bitter and violent legacy.” As Ruthman states “The death of Muhammad caused a split that was never resolved.”*

*After Muhammad’s death, the Islam faced 5 main problems, who would rule them? Muhammad had been the “seal of the prophets” and the Qur’an stated no one could rule but Allah and Muhammad therefore was it right to find a replacement? Also, Ridda wars were creating economic problems, the whole community had lost its’ leader and there was no natural successor.*

*Many of the tribes Muhammad had made alligences with were not part of the Islamic Umma and therefore left after Muhammad died. They wished to find better economic situations elsewhere.*

*Poor economic conditions and a population growth lead to a bitter and violent outburst known as the Ridda wars. Abu Bakr, Muhammad’s first successor, first male convert and uncle, was left to protect and unite Islam whilst fighting these wars. Despite succeeding and establishing the rules of war, Islam had already divided over who believed the first successor should have been. This created a bitter and violent legacy.*

*A solution was not reached until Umar was in power. He established a new way to choose the successors through a Shura council. Umar was a respected army official and expanded Islam into Persia, Syria, Iraq and Egypt. However, the expansion made control hard and created bitterness amongst other religions who were taxed if they did not convert to Islam. As a result, Umar was assassinated by a disgruntled slave. Muhammad had been a figure head of Islam that no one could replace.*

*Uthman further added to the bitterness and violence resulting from Muhammad’s death as he favoured family members for high-up positions. The divide between the wealthy and the poor continued to grow. As a result, rebels rose up in Kufa and Iraq. Uthman was also assassinated which became the 1<sup>st</sup> Fita or rebellion. He choose his nephew Mu’waiya to be the next caliph thus beginning a dynasty. Many people objected to this as Ali was choose by the Shura council to be the caliph.*

*This ultimatly divided Islam forever as Ali fought Ai’shia who objected him at the Battle of Camel. Ali won but the violence escalated as he then fought Mu’waiya and had to accept arbitution as Mu’waiya’s army placed pages of the Qur’an on the end of their spears. The fued continued with their sons Husayn and Yazid at the Battle of Karbala. Ali had been assassinated by Khajibes who had divided from Islam and the Battle of Karbala split Sunni Muslims and Shi’a Muslims.*

*However, despite Muhammad's death leading to a division causing bitterness and violence, it never should have. Muslim's live by brotherhood and Umma. They should have remained united in Umma and obeyed the teachings of the Qur'an. Muhammad's death only ended his prophethood but the Qur'an and hadith were still available. He was the last prophet therefore Muslims should have moved on using his teachings.*

*No matter the fact that division should not have happened, a violent legacy continues today as Muslim extremists cause violence and death through acts they believe are correct. Though Muslims should have remained united, Muhammads death led to a major division in Islam which created a bitter and violent legacy.*

### **Examiner's comments**

The candidate makes a very good effort to assess the claim that it was Muhammad's death which created the major division in the Islamic community. They approach the critical analysis by looking at each of the four caliphs. The candidate also tries to address the question by echoing the wording in the question, for example 'bitterness', which was a good approach to take. At times the response could have been stronger on critical analysis. At times the candidate is presenting information rather than being more selective and sharpening their argument. Overall it was a very good level of critical analysis.

Band 4

**Q3a** “Islam teaches dignity, respect and equal status for men and women.”

Present a case for this claim. [20]

**The above question could not be exemplified as the candidate's permission could not be obtained.**

**Q3b** Critically assess the claim that Islamic views on abortion and assisted conception reinforce the profound respect for women within Islam. [30]

**The above question could not be exemplified as the candidate's permission could not be obtained.**

## Section B

### Synoptic Assessment

#### Theme: Conflict, Freedom of Belief and Orthodoxy

**Q4a** With reference to **one** example, discuss how reformation and change permit religion to respond to challenge. You must support your answer with reference to at least one other unit of study. [20]

#### Student's response

*Reformation and change can be good but can also be conflicting with religion. In Muslim run countries it becomes entirely impossible to bring about reformation and change, causing a challenge to religion. It can permit religions to try and begin this change but the consequences are unusually good.*

*For example, in Iran a new religion emerged called the Bahá'ís. This religion goes against some of the aspects of Islam, such as total equality given, women and the fact more are to come after Muhammad, this goes against Shahada. The Bahá'ís then were already a threat. The main beliefs of the Bahá'í Faith is unity of religions and treating people as equals and conjuring peace. The Yaran (Friends) became helpers of the faith in Iran. Seven of these believers were helping the efforts of the Bahá'ís in teaching their faith and trying to improve life in Iran. However, the authorities of Iran arrested the Seven Yaran on blasphemy charges. This caused not just the Bahá'ís but other religions in the world to step forward and bring light to this challenge of injustice. Three of the Seven are yet to be released.*

*We can also see this in today's society with reformation and change on laws such as abortion in Northern Ireland or same sex marriage. Asher's bakery is owned by a Christian couple who refused to make a man's order as it included a pro-gay slogan. The couple went to court to fight for their beliefs but the court ruled their religious standing has nothing to do with providing a service to people. However, this was not enough, the couple went to the supreme court in the UK to further the battle of their freedom of belief and speech.*

*In the first example it explores how a religion responded to a challenge of reformation but with consequences. This can be likened to my other unit of study the study of Paul's letters. In Galatians we see the Judaises trying to go against the teaching of Paul which was bringing about reformation and change. Paul took the challenge of uniting the Judaises and the Galatians Christians through teaching unity in Christ, in the letter of Ephesians. Paul tries to reconcile with the Judaises so the two religions can live in peace together.*

*Another example is in North Korea where Christianity on the surface is non-existent as it interferes with the running of the country. However, this permits the religion a challenge for reformation and change. There are secret meetings between Christians and the underground meet ups to help keep the religion alive.*

### **Examiner's comments**

The response shows that the candidate is trying to address the question which is that reformation and change permit religion to respond to challenge. The candidate draws on the Bahai in Iran. They could however have made even better use of this material to present and support arguments relating to the question. Similarly, the response then goes on to outline the Asher's Case demonstrating knowledge and understanding but not so much analysis. The candidate then makes a successful link back to their second area of study which is Paul's New Testament letters. The candidate uses one final example which is North Korea to show how religion does bring the challenge of change. At times the quality of synoptic knowledge and understanding is very good and at others it is good.

Band 4

**Q4b** “Religion in the past has often been the source of conflict, but religion has also played an important part in resolving conflict.”

Critically evaluate this statement. You must refer to other aspects of human experience in your answer. [30]

### Student's response

*Religion in the past can be seen as a source of conflict. For example, Galileo in the 17<sup>th</sup> century was convicted of heresy against the Catholic Church. Galileo taught that the Earth revolved around the sun and not as the Catholic church believed that the sun revolved around the Earth. Galileo was convicted and put under house arrest until the end of this life. Religion here was in conflict with science and caused a man to be wrongfully accused and arrested.*

*There have been other scandals and sources of conflict in the Catholic Church in regards to women and sex scandals. The vatican likened women becoming roles in the church as a 'crime against sacraments' but pedophilea was likened to a 'crime against morals'. Conflict from the Catholic church and women has been in history for a very long time however, some churches in America allow women to be ordained and become ministers. The vatican also threatened those involved in the major sex scandal in the south of Ireland for priests and ministers to be excommunicated if they spoke out about what had happened. Later Pope Benedict xvi issued an apology to those involved, the families and the victims to the crimes committed which immensely resolved conflict at the time and the future.*

*Desmond Tutu is a great example of how religion played an important part of resolving conflict during the apartheid in South Africa. Through his efforts inspired by Christianity and creating peace, Desmond helped emensly in the stop to apartheid. He was given a nobel prize and Nelson Mandella appointed him head of a peace and reconciliation team.*

*Another religion inspired organisation which plays a huge part in resolving conflict in Northern Ireland is Corrymeela. This organisation has ran from the day of the troubles to present day. Corrymeela have worked with hundreds of people affected by conflict in Northern Ireland but also with those victims of oppression and discrimination such as homosexuals by creating workshops and discussions.*

*However, religion and state still cause issues today and in history. For example, Northern Ireland does not have the abortion act of 1976 in place. Marie Stopes clinic here in Belfast is unable to perform any major procedures due to religion ruling state. As Christianity is against abortion and the leader of the main party in Northern Ireland, the DUP Arlene Foster rules against passing abortion and same sex marriage. In Leviticus it describes homosexuality as being an 'abomination' and has prevented the passing of same sex marriage, still causing conflict today.*

*A religion named the Bahá'í Faith dedicates its efforts to the resolution of conflict and creating peace and unity. The religion was founded 200 years ago and plays a part today in resolving conflict. The efforts of the Bahá'ís include children's classes which teach children the values and morals which are lacking today in society of acceptance, love, kindness and humility. The Bahá'ís also work with authorities in different countries to keep peace. For example, in Haifa, the Bahá'ís are described as the most peaceful religion to work with in Israel.*

*Religion has been the cause of conflict but has always put right its wrongs when possible and any religion teaches the same message of loving one another.*

### **Examiner's comments**

The candidate begins by addressing how religion could be seen to have created conflict and referred to the example of Galileo and made a clear critical point, which directly targeted the question. The response goes on to other human experience examples such as the debate over women and paedophilia in the Roman Catholic Church. There is a degree of sophistication in the analysis offered. Desmond Tutu is considered as an example of someone who tried to use religion to resolve conflict and similarly the Bahai are used again (which was also used in the AO1 task and cannot be fully credited). The response makes reference to how religion and state can be the source of conflict and makes reference to the Bible and the stances of Northern Ireland politicians. Overall the response was judged to be a very good attempt at synoptic critical assessment.

Band 4





INVESTORS  
IN PEOPLE

