



GCE AS MARKING SCHEME

SUMMER 2017

**AS (NEW)
RELIGIOUS STUDIES
UNIT 1- OPTION B
AN INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY OF ISLAM
2120UB0-1**

INTRODUCTION

This marking scheme was used by WJEC for the 2017 examination. It was finalised after detailed discussion at examiners' conferences by all the examiners involved in the assessment. The conference was held shortly after the paper was taken so that reference could be made to the full range of candidates' responses, with photocopied scripts forming the basis of discussion. The aim of the conference was to ensure that the marking scheme was interpreted and applied in the same way by all examiners.

It is hoped that this information will be of assistance to centres but it is recognised at the same time that, without the benefit of participation in the examiners' conference, teachers may have different views on certain matters of detail or interpretation.

WJEC regrets that it cannot enter into any discussion or correspondence about this marking scheme.

AS RELIGIOUS STUDIES

MARKING INSTRUCTIONS

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.

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 | <p style="text-align: center;">Assessment Objective AO1 – Part (a) questions 15 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> |
|----------|---|
| 5 | <p style="text-align: center;">13-15 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 shows an excellent standard of coherence, clarity and organisation. • 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 /vocabulary in context. • Excellent spelling, punctuation and grammar. |
| 4 | <p style="text-align: center;">10-12 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 shows a very good standard of coherence, clarity and organisation. • 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. • Very good spelling, punctuation and grammar. |
| 3 | <p style="text-align: center;">7-9 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 shows a satisfactory standard of coherence, clarity and organisation. • 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. • Satisfactory spelling, punctuation and grammar. |
| 2 | <p style="text-align: center;">4-6 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. • Partially accurate response, with some signs of coherence, clarity and organisation. • 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. • Some minor, recurring errors in spelling, punctuation and grammar. |
| 1 | <p style="text-align: center;">1-3 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. • Very limited accuracy within the response, with little coherence, clarity and organisation. • 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 • Errors in spelling, punctuation and grammar affect the meaning and clarity of communication. <p>N.B. A maximum of 1 mark 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 15 marks <i>Analyse and evaluate aspects of, and approaches to, religion and belief, including their significance, influence and study.</i> |
|-------------|---|
| 5 | <p>13-15 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. • The response shows an excellent standard of coherence, clarity and organisation. • 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. • Excellent spelling, punctuation and grammar. |
| 4 | <p>10-12 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 response shows a very good standard of coherence, clarity and organisation. • The views given are clearly supported by detailed reasoning and/or evidence. • Accurate use of specialist language and vocabulary in context. • Very good spelling, punctuation and grammar. |
| 3 | <p>7-9 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. • The response shows a satisfactory standard of coherence, clarity and organisation. • Most of the views given are satisfactorily supported by reasoning and/or evidence. • Mainly accurate use of specialist language and vocabulary in context. • Satisfactory spelling, punctuation and grammar. |
| 2 | <p>4-6 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. • Partially accurate response, with some signs of coherence, clarity and organisation. • 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. • Some minor, recurring errors in spelling, punctuation and grammar. |
| 1 | <p>1-3 marks</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A basic analysis and limited evaluation of the issue. • Very limited accuracy within the response, with little coherence, clarity and organisation. • 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 grasp of basic specialist language and vocabulary. • Errors in spelling, punctuation and grammar affect the meaning and clarity of communication. |
| 0 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No relevant analysis or evaluation. |

Option B: An Introduction to the Study of Islam

MARK SCHEME

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

Section A

1. (a) Explain the importance of the shahadah for Islam. [AO1 15]

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

- The shahadah is: “There is no God but Allah and Muhammad is the messenger of Allah.” It is derived from the term ‘ash-shadu’ (“I declare” or “I bear witness”) and literally means witness, evidence or testimony.
- Shahadah is the ultimate declaration of faith for Islam but it is more than a creed or statement of belief.
- The first part affirms the Islamic concept of tawhid because it includes the statement that Allah has no equals. Shahadah is not just a matter of personal belief, but rather a public testimony of truth and a Muslim duty, to declare it.
- The shahadah is a means of recognising conversion but it is also vital that this state of mind be maintained and a disciplined approach to life follow from it. When converts repeat this statement twice with sincerity then they belong to Islam.
- The shahadah is returned to and ‘renewed’ daily by Muslims. It is for Muslims a reflection of eternal fact and not simply a ‘belief’. It is whispered to a newborn child at birth, it is recited to the dying, and it has a key role in both prayer and worship.
- Shahadah brings together all the other four Pillars and is the basis for all articles of faith in Islam. The shahadah is there as a constant reminder of the oneness of God, the crucial role of Muhammad as ‘seal’ of the prophets but most importantly to facilitate God-consciousness.
- The shahadah puts Allah above all. God is first in one’s life as a Muslim. A constant, mindful awareness of this in every aspect and action of daily life is the goal of every Muslim devotee.

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

1. (b) 'Public declaration of the shahadah is more important than the private faith it represents.'

Evaluate this view.

[AO2 15]

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

- The shahadah is the basis of Muslim faith and a 'declaration', a statement made that clarifies one's faith in public and, for a Muslim, declares an essential truth. The question then arises, is it more to do with private thoughts, intentions and belief, or, it is more to do with making a statement for the benefit of others?
- One line of argument is that the shahadah is indeed a statement made that underlines the importance of personal faith. For an individual Muslim it reminds them that they should put Allah above all. Allah is first in one's life as a Muslim not just in religious matters but for all aspects of life. A constant, mindful awareness of Allah's unique and ultimate status in every aspect and action of daily life is the goal of every Muslim devotee.
- In supporting of this line of argument, the shahadah is integrated within personal aspects of a Muslim life, notably on landmark occasions e.g. recited at birth, recited to those nearing death. It indicates a doorway or entrance for access to Muslim faith and to Allah.
- However, the area of conversion, is where the dual nature of the shahadah is revealed. Technically, to be recognised by the ummah as Muslim one needs to bear witness in front of either two witnesses or the Imam. In this sense, one could argue it is more a public statement of faith. It is, in essence, an action.
- In addition, the notion of 'bearing witness' has parallels with Arabic legal practices involving witnesses to establish the truth. This legal parallel once again suggests the importance of affirmation of the shahadah as a public confirmation of this.
- It could be argued that the shahadah tends to have both a dual nature and purpose as both private and public for different reasons.

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

2. (a) Outline Islamic teachings about angels.

[AO1 15]

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

- The Islamic belief in angels is one of the central teachings of Islam. A belief in angels is considered one of the six major beliefs.
- Angels are regarded as intermediaries sent directly from Allah who obey his commands in all things. If angels did not exist then revelation to humanity from Allah would be impossible.
- All angels have a spiritual role in Paradise. Angels are made of light, they are sexless and they have consciousness and full awareness of all matters but they do not have free will. They are totally obedient, but not perfect since perfection is Allah's alone. Physically, they have hands and wings but they do not need to eat.
- Angels in Islam are "mirrors" in that they reflect the divine essence, giving people a glimpse of Allah. Therefore, the existence of angels reflect people's needs and not those of Allah.
- Israfil is the angel who will blow the trumpet from a holy rock in Jerusalem to announce the Day of Judgement – akhirah.
- Jibril is the angel of revelations, obviously significant for the crucial role in revealing the Qur'an to Muhammad on the Night of Power.
- Mikail is seen as an equal of Jibril and is generally seen as the sustainer of creatures and the natural world.
- There is also an Angel of Death that separates souls from their bodies; souls remain in Barzakh, an intermediate state beyond all concept of space and time, and rejoin their bodies on the Final Day of Resurrection and Judgement.
- There are also pairs of angels: two 'recording angels' sit on an individual's shoulders and write down each action that a person performs; another pair of angels test Muslims in the grave.

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

2. (b) 'Belief in angels is not really essential for Muslims today.'

Evaluate this view.

[AO2 15]

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

- A line of argument that supports unimportance of angels today is the fact that Muhammad, as Seal of Prophets, brought with him the final revelation. Does this mean that the role of angels as intermediaries is at an end? One does not need the role of an angel for conversion to, or belief in Allah and Muhammad as the prophet of Allah.
- In addition, the true role of angels is to serve and to praise Allah; their purpose and function is heavenly and not mundane.
- Finally, angels are creatures of 'mythology' and are symbolic for some; such an argument suggests that angels are not necessary and only to serve as illustration for teaching purposes.
- In contrast to this line of thinking, however, is that belief in angels is a fundamental Islamic article of faith and therefore essential today e.g. to forget the importance of Jibril allows the potential for Muslims to lose the significance of Allah's transcendence.
- Not only this, there are clear Qur'anic references to angels and a very detailed account in Islamic teachings of their specific names and mundane duties.
- It would seem, then, that a temptation to disregard angels as unessential for Islam is directly related to the notion of the apparent inactivity since the final revelation and the Day of Final Judgement.
- Alternatively this is not entirely true and a belief in angels, according to Islam should be avoided at one's peril.
- Despite the temptation to not ascribe equal value to the teachings about angels in Islam to other teachings, it must be remembered that their place as one of the fundamental teachings in Islam, namely as an article of faith.

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

Section B

3. (a) Explain the significance of the Hijrah for the development of Islam. [AO1 15]

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

- The key factors that led to the Hijrah are as follows: persecution; threats on life; inability to practise Islam freely; lack of influence and spread of Islam; continued growing opposition from leading Makkans.
- The person and message of Muhammad was seen as a threat to religious beliefs, to trade, to ancestors and to the status of Makkan leaders. Attempts to migrate to Taif had failed; Muhammad had made converts from Madinah at trade fairs and saw this as a sign from God. Muhammad and his followers were in a desperate situation. They feared for their lives. There was only one solution, and this was to flee for safety, to a place beyond the reach of persecution and oppression.
- It is so important an event to Muslims that it marks the beginning of the Muslim calendar.
- It is called the 'Hijrah' ('flight') and was significant for the development of Islam because Muhammad's life was saved.
- It was a psychological turning point of inestimable importance transforming a 'faith minority' into a community and eventually an empire.
- The Hijrah was just as much a warm welcome into a new world. It was a completely different environment in Madinah.
- Madinah was offering an environment in which to establish formal practices of Islam.
- In addition, Muhammad was desired as an arbitrator and offered high rank and status if he were to choose to leave Makkah and settle in Madinah.
- Most important of all, just as Allah provided protection for the 'escape', it is believed that such an environment conducive to the development of Islam in Madinah was also the will of Allah.
- The Suras in the Qur'an that follow the Hijrah contain laws to govern the Muslim community: pillars of Islam; rite and ritual; marriage; commerce; finance; international relations; war/peace; rules regarding hypocrites and 'people of the Book'.

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

3. (b) 'The basic tenets of Islam were first introduced in Madinah.'

Evaluate this view.

[AO2 15]

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

- The first line of argument could be that there is a clear contrast between Makkah and Madinah in the early history of Islam in relation to the establishment and growth of Islam. The basic tenets relate to the basic teachings and practices.
- In Makkah practices were restricted due to persecution whereas in Madinah they were uninhibited. Muhammad in Makkah had acted as a missionary to his pagan kinsmen but in Madinah he aims to keep the Muslim community intact. Established religious practices created unity within the community and so daily prayers and the establishment of the first fully functioning masjid demonstrates that the first tenets were introduced in Madinah.
- In support of this, Muhammad recognised the differences and made most of the opportunity to manipulate the support that he had in Madinah and took the opportunity to lead and establish the basic tenets of practice.
- However, it could be argued that Muhammad's community was still an Arab institution based on Arab notions of tribal society. In this sense, there could be a question as to how far the establishment was Islamic or simply a social model.
- Nevertheless, against this is the argument that there are so many similarities between the ummah and traditional tribal society anyway, that Muhammad himself saw the ummah as a tribe, though a new and radically innovative one moulded by the basic tenets of Islam.
- The strongest counter argument is that Islam had existed and functioned for years in Makkah. The first revelation was while Muhammad was in Makkah. In addition, the basic tenets of teaching were first received in Makkah such as monotheism, judgement and submission.
- The first Muslims believers and community were in Makkah and, although small, did impact upon Makkah enough so as to cause uproar amongst the Makkans and subsequent persecution.

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

4. (a) Examine the meaning of various practices associated with Hajj in Islam. [AO1 15]

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

Candidates may begin with some background information on the Hajj e.g. Hajj is derived from a word meaning 'circle' and refers to the practice of going around the stone known as tawaf.

An explanation of some of the key practices during Hajj is expected but the following is a full list and not all is expected in the time available.

- Pilgrims long to touch or kiss the famous black stone (hajar al-aswad) . It is believed that Hagar and Ishmael (Abraham's wife and son) are buried under the northwest wall.
- Every Muslim must be in a state of ihram, that is, to be pure and clean before God. To symbolise this, white clothing is worn. The two simple white sheets symbolize, not only purity, but also modesty, equality, and obedience.
- On day two the pilgrims enter the great mosque and perform seven circumambulations of the ka'ba. This represents the centrality of God in their lives.
- Then, following this, sai (or 'sa'y', exertion) is performed by walking between the two hills of al-Safa and al-Marwa. This emulates the trials and tribulations of Hagar in searching for water for herself and her son Ishmael.
- At the end of sai, pilgrims take some of the zamzam water (a spring that God cause to miraculously appear), which has suggested healing properties.
- At Mina is practised wuquf, which means 'standing', and represents a believer standing before his or her Creator and asking for forgiveness.
- In the valley of Mina there occurs the 'stoning of Satan'. It commemorates Abraham rejecting Satan's suggestion that he should save his son instead of follow the command of God. A pilgrim is encouraged to sacrifice a sheep, goat or camel just as Abraham did.

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

4. (b) 'Hajj has more meaning for the individual than the community.'

Evaluate this view.

[AO2 15]

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

- Several significant features give meaning for the Muslim community (ummah).
 1. The significance of ihram is not just one of purity but also due to the simple white clothing also conveys the message of equality and is for the whole community.
 2. The celebrations of Id ul Adha unite the pilgrims as a microcosmic ummah and so it is for the whole community.
 3. Id ul Adha is celebrated by all Muslims worldwide (the macrocosmic ummah) and so it is for the whole community.
 4. Id ul Adha is a public holiday in Muslim countries and so it is for the whole community.
 5. Self-sacrifice and giving is encouraged which is obviously evidence that suggests it has meaning for the whole community.
 6. The wider ummah is appreciated through splitting the meat from the sacrifice into thirds for family, friends and the poor and so it is for the whole community.
 7. It is also obligatory to give money to charity to be used to help poor people buy new clothes and food so they too can celebrate Id and so it is for the whole community.
- In many ways it is the most important personal journey.
 1. It is classed as above and beyond anything in comparison to other religious experiences a Muslim may have.
 2. Indeed, the once-in-a-lifetime experience cannot be duplicated.
 3. It is of great personal devotional value and one through which a Muslim can become closer to Allah and therefore has more meaning for the individual.
 4. Although done in unity, it must be remembered that the Hajj is essentially a personal religious journey.
 5. It could be argued that it is better seen as one of religious and spiritual development for the individual who ultimately benefits the most.

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

5. (a) Explain ways in which Ashura is celebrated by Shi'a Muslims.

[AO1 15]

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

- Ashura is not a celebration in the typical understanding of the word but a 'religious celebration' or 'festival' in that it commemorates an event of great religious significance. Ashura is a period of public mourning and reflection.
- For the first nine days Shi'a mourners will wear black and even some public buildings will be covered in black cloth.
- Certain activities usually associated with leisure or pleasure, are avoided. For example, singing, playing music, holding weddings and celebrations will not take place.
- There is a public expression of mourning and grief. The streets in Karbala are filled with mourners, many of whom are pilgrims and processions in other places around the world are also held.
- The observances during Ashura are aimed at communicating a public message of the suffering of both Ali and Husayn their struggle against injustice. Mourners empathise with the persecutions suffered particularly by Husayn, by beating their breasts and heads with their hands, with swords and even chains.
- Some may wear red paint instead of scratching and cutting their bodies and many are encouraged to give a blood donation instead.
- The event is a re-enactment of the suffering of Karbala and the procession mirrors a funeral procession with many moving on to the tomb-shrine of Husayn.
- The ta'ziyah is a dramatic re-enactment of the events of the battle of Karbala and takes place in large halls called Husayniyyat built adjacent to mosques, or performed in an open area.
- The pilgrimage of mourners, especially to Husayn's tomb in Karbala, during Ashura is also popular. These holy sites draw hundreds of thousands of pilgrims throughout the year.
- The shrine stands at a place close to where Husayn is believed to have been martyred, surrounded by wooden gates with glass decorations.

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

5. (b) 'The emphasis given to suffering at Ashura is too strong.'

Evaluate this view.

[AO2 15]

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

- The emphasis on suffering is clearly very strong. Every year the media reports images of blood soaked pilgrims parading through the streets of Karbala. Even children get involved with self-harm either by beating, flagellation or cutting themselves.
- However, one line of argument against the emphasis on suffering is to appeal to the actions of Muhammad. Clearly Muhammad did not encourage self-mutilation as a religious exercise.
- To support this, authorities from within Shi'a Islam try to dissuade such practices, including senior Shi'i clerics who may frown upon these harmful and arguably excessive mourning rituals.
- Nonetheless, practising Shi'a Muslims would say that, whilst it may appear too strong an emphasis on suffering, it is actually fervent expression of deeply held beliefs that are conducive to spirituality.
- Evidence suggests that Shi'a devotees are quite happy to participate and the obligation to do so is not through duty but from devotion. Compared to the martyrs at Karbala, theirs is just a fleeting glimpse of the experience of suffering and persecution.
- Another line of reasoning could be that the emphasis on suffering serves to deepen their understanding of their faith in that it leads to a vision of a future hope and belief of redemption on the Day of Final Judgement.
- A strong argument is that the emphasis on suffering is superseded by the final goal and purpose of Shi'a Islam that despite the suffering and persecution there will be justice and paradise in the end
- A final argument could be that if we can begin to see Ashura through the eyes of Shi'a devotees and appreciate the true context of their religious devotion during Ashura, then we may argue that the emphasis on suffering is strong because it needs to be so.

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