



Cambridge International AS & A Level

ISLAMIC STUDIES

9488/32

Paper 3 Heritage of Islam

May/June 2026

MARK SCHEME

Maximum Mark: 50

Published

This mark scheme contains the instructions and marking guidance that our examiners used to mark candidate responses for this component.

Before they start marking, examiners complete a standardisation process. They review a range of candidate responses and discuss the mark scheme in detail to agree which answers can and cannot be accepted. Examiners award marks where it is clear that candidate responses have met the requirements of the mark scheme. These requirements may vary between different components or different versions of the same component, depending on the exact requirements of the question and the candidate responses seen during the standardisation process.

Sometimes, our mark schemes may allow marks to be awarded to responses which contain elements that are factually incorrect or for content not covered by the syllabus. We do this in response to the demands of a specific question to support candidates and make sure that our assessments are fair. However, these allowances should not be used as a guide for teaching and learning.

We cannot discuss the mark scheme with schools, and we recommend that schools read the mark scheme together with the assessment material and the Principal Examiner Report for Teachers.

This document consists of **14** printed pages.

General marking principles

All examiners must apply these marking principles when marking candidate responses.

1	Examiners must award marks for each response in line with: - the specific content defined in the mark scheme - the specific skills defined in the mark scheme or in the level descriptions - the standard of response required as exemplified by the standardisation scripts.
2	Examiners must award whole marks (not half marks, or other fractions).
3	Examiners must award marks positively . This means that: - marks are not deducted for errors or omissions - marks are awarded for correct/valid answers as defined in the mark scheme and also for other valid answers which go beyond the scope of the syllabus and mark scheme referring to your team leader as appropriate - the quality of spelling, punctuation and grammar are judged only when the mark scheme indicates that these features are specifically assessed in the question. However, the meaning of all responses must be unambiguous.
4	Examiners must consistently apply the requirements of the mark scheme and any rules for what to do when candidates have not followed instructions correctly.
5	Examiners must use the full range of marks defined in the mark scheme, unless limited by the quality of the candidate responses seen.
6	Examiners must award marks according to the mark scheme and must not award marks with grade thresholds or grade descriptions in mind.

Annotations guidance for centres

Examiners use a system of annotations as a shorthand for communicating their marking decisions to one another. Examiners are trained during the standardisation process on how and when to use annotations. The purpose of annotations is to inform the standardisation and monitoring processes and guide the supervising examiners when they are checking the work of examiners within their team. The meaning of annotations and how they are used is specific to each component and is understood by all examiners who mark the component.

We publish annotations in our mark schemes to help centres understand the annotations they may see on copies of scripts. Note that there may not be a direct correlation between the number of annotations on a script and the mark awarded. Similarly, the use of an annotation may not be an indication of the quality of the response.

The annotations listed below were available to examiners marking this component in this series.

Annotations

Annotation	Meaning
	Correct point
N/A	Highlighting areas of text
N/A	Allows comments to be entered in speech bubbles on the candidate response.
N/A	Allows comments to be entered at the bottom of the RM marking window and then displayed when the associated question item is navigated to.
	Too vague
	Level one
	Level two
	Level three
	Level four
	Level five
	Not answered question
	Indicates that the point has been noted, but no credit has been given.
	Evaluation

Generic levels of response descriptors

These level descriptors address assessment objectives (AOs) 1 and 2 and should be used in conjunction with the indicative content for each question in the mark scheme.

Assessment objectives**AO1 Knowledge and understanding**

Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of Islamic teachings, texts, beliefs and practices including their relevance for individual Muslims and communities.

AO2 Analysis and evaluation

Analyse, evaluate and discuss evidence, points of view and issues in Islam.

Generic marking principles

- (a) Examiners should use the performance summary statements at the top of the descriptors to help to identify a level which matches the candidate's response. However, the final decision on the band and the mark within the band should be made on the basis of **all** the descriptors in the level and not primarily using the performance summary statement.
- (b) Examiners should start at the lowest level, if the answer meets all the criteria they should then move to the next level and so on. The Examiner should repeat this process until there is a match between the overall answer and the level descriptor. Examiners should use a best-fit approach when deciding upon the level, it is possible for a different level to be chosen for each AO.
- (c) If the Examiner identifies all aspects of the level descriptor within the answer, then the highest mark for the level should be given. Examiners should also make reference to the indicative content when deciding on the mark within a level to ensure that there is sufficient relevant content evident within the answer for the level and mark. Examiners should be prepared to credit material in answers which is not contained in the indicative content.
- (d) The Examiner may need to make a judgement within a level or between two or more level statements. Once a 'best-fit' level statement has been identified, use the following guidance to decide on a specific mark:
 - Where the candidate's work **convincingly** meets the level statement, you should award the highest mark.
 - Where the candidate's work **adequately** meets the level statement, you should award the most appropriate mark in the middle of the range.
 - Where the candidate's work **just** meets the level statement, you should award the lowest mark.

AO1 Knowledge and understanding grid

(For Questions 1(a), 2(a), 3(a) and 4(a))

Level	AO1 Knowledge and understanding	Marks
Level 4	Detailed accurate knowledge with good understanding • Uses a range of detailed, accurate and relevant knowledge. • Demonstrates understanding through a well-developed response. • Fully addresses the question. • Good understanding of the wider context, if relevant.	9–10
Level 3	Mostly accurate knowledge with some understanding • Uses a range of mostly accurate and relevant knowledge. • Demonstrates understanding through a developed response. • Addresses most aspects of the question. • Some engagement with the wider context, if relevant.	6–8
Level 2	Partially accurate knowledge with limited understanding • Uses a range of knowledge which may be partially accurate. • Demonstrates limited understanding through a partially developed response. • Attempts to address the question. • Attempts to engage with the wider context, if relevant.	3–5
Level 1	Limited knowledge and basic understanding • Identifies a limited range of knowledge which may not be accurate. • Demonstrates basic understanding through a limited response. • Response is relevant to the topic, but does not directly address the question. • Little or no reference to the wider context, if relevant.	1–2
Level 0	No relevant material to credit.	0

AO2 Analysis and evaluation

(For Questions 1(b), 2(b), 3(b) and 4(b))

Level	AO2 Analysis and evaluation	Marks
Level 5	Alternative conclusions with analysis of points of view - Analyses the importance and/or strength of different points of view in detail. - Uses accurate evidence to support a coherent and well-structured discussion. - Coherent conclusion to the question which evaluates knowledge and points of view and assesses alternative conclusions.	13–15
Level 4	Coherent conclusion supported by evidenced points of view - Discusses different points of view in some detail. - Uses accurate evidence to support a well-structured discussion. - Coherent conclusion to the question which evaluates knowledge and points of view.	10–12
Level 3	Clear conclusion with different points of view - Recognises different points of view and discusses at least one in some detail. - Uses accurate evidence to support discussion. - Clear conclusion to the question which is linked to a range of knowledge and points of view.	7–9
Level 2	Basic conclusion with a supported point of view - Discusses one point of view. - Uses supporting evidence for one or more relevant points. The support may not be wholly relevant or accurate. - Attempted conclusion to the question which is linked to knowledge and/or a point of view.	4–6
Level 1	Limited interpretation with a point of view - States a point of view. - Little or no supporting evidence. - Attempted interpretation which may not directly address the question.	1–3
Level 0	No relevant material to credit.	0

Question	Answer	Marks
Either		
1(a)	Describe interfaith relations in Muslim Spain. You should refer to Figure 1.1 and your own knowledge in your answer. AO1 – Knowledge and understanding Mark according to the AO1 – 10-mark levels of response marking grid for knowledge and understanding. Answers may include some of the following ideas, but all valid material must be credited. - Fig. 1.1 shows the interior of Cordoba Mosque. The arches to the left and wall to the rear of them is consistent with Islamic style: geometrical patterns and no images. - To the right, a church altar has been introduced. This shows that the same space was used at varying times by both Christians and Muslims. - The heritage of both visible here may be taken to show that good interfaith relations in Muslim Spain meant that the same spiritual space and quality architecture were preserved and not destroyed as rulers changed. - This architectural legacy was taken forward by Christians and Muslims in the construction of the palace at Seville, using a mixture of Arabic, Islamic, geometrical style patterns, and preserved by Christians as a work of art and symbol of power. - The famous Alhambra palace in Granada contains both central Christian style architecture as well as surrounding water features and calligraphy in the open turrets. - Jewish stonemasons helped to build the Great Mosque at Cordoba and Christian craftsmen fitted mosaics, showing cross-religious working. - Interfaith relations might be described as cordial in Muslim Spain: Jews, Christians and Muslims all played a role in the government of various Caliphs even as Prime Minister on occasion. - Islam is also a missionary religion, and Imams were appointed to villages across Muslim Spain. The Great Mosque of Cordoba was extended and, over time, many or perhaps most of the people converted to Islam. - Written works from Muslims, Christians and Jews flourished under Muslim Spain. For example, Jewish philosophy flowered with the writings of one of the most famous Jewish philosophers, Maimonides. Some argue that Muslim Spain was the only truly tolerant place in the history of Europe: in Muslim Spain Christians and Jews could be intellectuals.	10

Question	Answer	Marks
1(b)	'The legacy of interfaith relations from Muslim Spain is still influential today.' Do you agree? Give reasons for your answer. AO2 – Analysis and evaluation Mark according to the AO2 – 15-mark levels of response marking grid for analysis and evaluation. Answers may refer to any Islamic religious theory or teaching. Candidates may propose, analyse and evaluate some of the following arguments. All relevant arguments must be credited. Definitions - To be influential means it is considered in the minds of people relating to those of other faiths in different walks of life; also, in the style of buildings and social relations. Agree - Many tourists come to see famous sites built by Muslims, and the majority who come to Granada or Cordoba are non-Muslims, showing mutual respect to the shared legacy. - People of different faiths can be Prime Minister, as they did under Muslim Spain. 'La Convivencia', the period of tolerance, might be argued to underpin the relaxed culture of social interaction in modern Spain in which people of different faiths freely mix and socialise. Disagree - The legacy itself could be challenged. It varied and was sometimes good but sometimes Caliphs expelled Jews and executed Christians. - The Muslim Caliph always held the upper hand. Modern Spain is based on secularism and does not look back to this part of the legacy. - Modern laws on equality and secularism in society are by far the biggest influence on people's mindset today and interfaith relations should be considered in this context. Conclusions - An overall conclusion might assess the extent to which influence is still there, and whether this is significant for interfaith relations in the twenty-first century.	15

Question	Answer	Marks
2(a)	Explain ways in which 'Abbasid scientists contributed to medicine. You should refer to Fig. 2.1 and your own knowledge in your answer. AO1 – Knowledge and understanding Mark according to the AO1 – 10-mark levels of response marking grid for knowledge and understanding. Answers may include some of the following ideas, but all valid material must be credited. - Fig. 2.1 shows a diagram of parts of the human body made by a Muslim scientist. The drawing is typical of 'Abbasid style. Unlike many other civilisations at the time, the 'Abbasids paid attention to draw the human body with detail and accuracy. - Parts are named in Arabic, and the digestive system and blood vessels are clearly visible. Such diagrams helped to pave the way for modern medicine. - Candidates might choose any of a large number of 'Abbasid scientists and comment similarly on their methods of observation and recording, a contribution which helped to preserve the knowledge of the ancient Greeks and prepare the world for a more rational age to come. - Candidates might refer to named scientists. Ibn Sina produced the standard medical textbook, the Canon of Medicine. Drawing on many Greek works, he produced a large volume including diagrams and gave natural causes for diseases at a time when most people assumed illness was due to supernatural reasons, spirits and luck. His book was used until the 1650s in the Middle East and Europe later too. - Ibn al-Haytham researched optics. He looked at the way light was refracted and produced images through the human eye. He concluded that vision then occurred in the brain, where images are made sense of. He wrote a book of optics which helped further development of medicine. - Ibn Rushd who contributed to medicine as well as philosophy, might be mentioned. - The 'Abbasid Caliphs insisted on division of areas of medicine, so doctors and pharmacies were kept separate to ensure no undue influence for profit was placed upon doctors' decisions. This was credited with helping to develop medical practice.	10

Question	Answer	Marks
2(b)	‘The ‘Abbasid scientists did little more than copy the Greeks.’ Do you agree? Explain your answer. AO2 – Analysis and evaluation Mark according to the AO2 – 15-mark levels of response marking grid for analysis and evaluation. Answers may refer to any Islamic religious theory or teaching. Candidates may propose, analyse and evaluate some of the following arguments. All relevant arguments must be credited. Definitions - The context is the translation movement under the ‘Abbasids in which Greek works and others were translated into Arabic. The nature of science itself is relevant and might be defined as objective enquiry. Agree - There were huge numbers of copies made at the centre of learning in Baghdad. Al-Kindi and other scholars spent most of their time making these translations. ‘Abbasid science was restricted by the need to accept revealed text in the Qur’an, so objective enquiry could not develop beyond this. In practical terms this meant they did little more than copy the Greeks. - Greek philosophy and science were the basis for what the ‘Abbasids did, and although they added some knowledge and experiments, these might be seen as of lesser significance. Disagree - The translation movement included copies of works from the Indian subcontinent, Persia and elsewhere, not just the Greeks. This interchange of learning meant that science could develop. - Ibn al-Haytham has been described by some, including Professor Jim al-Khalili, as the father of scientific method, as he introduced the idea that a hypothesis could be tested by experiment and reasoning. - Developments can be traced in some areas such as pharmacies and cataract operations, which helped pave the way for modern treatments. Conclusions - An overall statement might be made assessing how far the statement holds true, bearing in mind the discussion.	15

Question	Answer	Marks
3(a)	Explain <u>three</u> ways Muslims may invite others to Islam (<i>da'wah</i>). AO1 – Knowledge and understanding Mark according to the AO1 – 10-mark levels of response marking grid for knowledge and understanding. Answers may include some of the following ideas, but all valid material must be credited. • Distribute the Qur'an. The Qur'an as a book can be given out, as well as translations and explanations in local languages, so that people can read and understand it and come to know about the main beliefs of Islam in this way. • Preach and explain, especially by Muslim scholars. They can reach out to those interested or be on hand if someone is enquiring and comes to a mosque asking about Islam. Scholars can give authentic knowledge, helping to clear up any misunderstandings or misconceptions about Islam. • Make websites to advertise Islam and its main beliefs. Additionally, question and answer forums can be included so that those interested can post questions and comments to help find out more about the religion. • Conduct street preaching is practised by some. This can engage shoppers and people who would not normally think about religion and show the passionate commitment of some Muslims to others through their willingness to stand up in public and profess their beliefs. • Take part in social action. This includes distributing charity to the poor and those in need, with food banks and soup kitchens. Even local litter picking to improve a neighbourhood can be a means of showing how Muslims care about the area, which may gain interest from others who can then talk about Islam. • Invite others to events such as shared meals in Ramadan (<i>iftar</i>). The experience can show that Muslims are kind and welcoming and can be a forum during which questions can be answered about Islamic practices. • Hold interfaith discussions, debates and so on, might help to explain Islamic beliefs and after that, invitations might occur. Discussions might be with those of other faiths or atheists, even TV shows about whether or not to believe in God, which can be opportunities for Muslims to explain their opinions. • Live by example, showing they are devout in prayer and humble in character. This might inspire others with their humility and steadfastness, and when they are asked about why they are practicing in this way, it can be an opportunity to explain Islamic beliefs.	10

Question	Answer	Marks
3(b)	Discuss which method of inviting people to Islam (<i>da'wah</i>) is most appropriate for today. AO2 – Analysis and evaluation Mark according to the AO2 – 15-mark levels of response marking grid for analysis and evaluation. Answers may refer to any Islamic religious theory or teaching. Candidates may propose, analyse and evaluate some of the following arguments. All relevant arguments must be credited. Definitions - Candidates might isolate some methods as raised in part (a) and set out how they will compare them in their essay, such as by evaluating their appropriateness in different cultures, countries or to different age groups. Appropriateness - The Qur'an encourages Muslims to guide others with wisdom using beautiful examples. This might guide Muslims to choose the most inspiring methods for today. Ref: Qur'an 16.125. 125. 'Invite (all) to the Way Of thy Lord with wisdom And beautiful preaching; And argue with them In ways that are best And most gracious: For thy Lord knoweth best, Who have strayed from His Path, And who receive guidance.' - It might be argued the use of internet resources most appropriate, because so many people the world over have access to the internet and it is a very effective way of reaching younger audiences today. Question and answers can also be given online relatively quickly, and young people do not have to overcome any apprehension they might have about entering a mosque for the first time. - However, it could be argued the internet is not appropriate because authenticity of knowledge cannot be guaranteed, therefore in this age of fake news and the like, people should seek genuine knowledge by going to a recognised scholar or Imam who can then give appropriate explanation. - It might be said that people want to read and decide for themselves nowadays so distributing literature, especially the Qur'an itself, is the best method. What better than rely on the word of God? Nowadays, people enjoy more individual freedom so it may be most appropriate for them to read and decide for themselves. - It may be argued that no one method is most appropriate and that different people respond differently so it is best to have a range available. - Comparisons may be made between methods to assess effectiveness, possibly in a range of contexts. Conclusions - An individual judgement should conclude the essay weighing up appropriateness for today according to the opinion of the candidate.	15

Question	Answer	Marks
4(a)	Explain how the belief in God in Islam is shown by calligraphy. AO1 – Knowledge and understanding Mark according to the AO1 – 10-mark levels of response marking grid for knowledge and understanding. Answers may include some of the following ideas, but all valid material must be credited. • Calligraphy is the beautification of Arabic words from the Qur'an, used to adorn mosques, illuminated copies of the Qur'an and wall hangings high up in the home. • Calligraphy is used in place of other forms of art. Idols and images of God are prohibited. God's attributes can instead be understood through words in the Qur'an, such as the 99 names of God. These names may be used in decorative calligraphy in wall hangings. • The names include the Merciful, Compassionate, Creator, Judge and so on, giving Muslims a sense of Islamic beliefs about God's attributes. • Examples of how the names are used in calligraphy can be seen in various mosques, such as in Kufic block calligraphy in the mosque in Yazd, Iran. This was built using square blue tiles in an archway, eight hundred years ago. At the Great Mosque of Xian, China, all ninety-nine names were carved out of wood in panels in the main prayer hall. The names can be seen on the wall of the modern Sheikh Zayed Grand Mosque in Abu Dhabi. • Two different styles of Arabic calligraphy both help to explain belief in God. Kufic came from the town of Kufa in Iraq. Kufic scribes wrote bold straight lines, making them easy to read. Kufic represents power, authority and simplicity with a focus on meaning and order in the world, as created by God. • Naskhi scribes came from North Africa and Al-Andalus (Spain). Naskhi scribes wrote joining up letters which flowed. The two styles of calligraphy can be seen in early Qur'ans and in the decoration of mosques. The following style reminds believers that God is everywhere, even where they cannot see, and God's mercy flows into their hearts during prayer. • Colours used in calligraphy also have symbolic meaning. Gold is the colour of the sun, which rises above all. This makes it transcendent, symbolising truth, from which comes yellow, symbolising knowledge. Blue is the colour of the sky and the sea, which are endless. This symbolises God's mercy, which sets the reader free. • Geometric, symmetrical patterns in the calligraphy reflect order in God's created world. Calligraphers take care to copy the Arabic words exactly so that there is no error in meaning, because the decoration is there not as an end in itself but to inspire understanding of the word of God.	10

Question	Answer	Marks
4(b)	‘The belief in God is more clearly shown in books rather than through architecture.’ Do you agree? Give reasons for your answer. AO2 – Analysis and evaluation Mark according to the AO2 – 15-mark levels of response marking grid for analysis and evaluation. Answers may refer to any Islamic religious theory or teaching. Candidates may propose, analyse and evaluate some of the following arguments. All relevant arguments must be credited. Definitions - Literature includes many books written by Islamic scholars to explain the meaning of beliefs. Architecture shows meaning through pattern and symbolism. Agree - Candidates might refer to works suggested by the syllabus or others and show how they help Muslims to understand beliefs about God. - Ibn Tufayl’s work Hayy ibn Yaqzan helps to explain belief in God through a philosophical novel. - Al-Ghazali’s work on the Incoherence of the Philosophers helps to point out difficulties in philosophy and recommends a devotional approach to understanding God, such as by following Sufism. - Ibn Khaldun’s work on social science, The Muqaddimah, helps to explain society from the point of view of an all-powerful creator and controller behind the universe. - The mystical poetry of Rabi‘a al-‘Adawiyya helps Muslims to understand the nature of God through allegory and tales with spiritual meaning. - Al-Biruni’s work on comparative religion, History of Religions, logically sets out the role of God and how this is expressed through different faiths. - It might be argued that these logically help teach understanding whereas architecture cannot be communicated on its own. Disagree - Architecture can help express meaning and inspire devotion through symbolism. - No one can fully understand God anyway, so both methods are only pointers and cannot be expected to express the complete nature of the incomprehensible. - Different people respond differently, so there is a place for both. Conclusions - An overall personal judgement should be made about which more clearly communicates the belief in God according to the opinion of the candidate.	15