4.4 Sunni and Shi'a Differences in Islamic Practice: 30-minute Pack

AQA 8062 · about 30 minutes

Total Marks

Name: _____ Date: ____ / ____ / _____

Answer ALL questions.

1 Give two short differences between Sunni and Shi'a practice, naming the practice and the contrasting approach, in the context of Islamic ritual obligation.

(Total for Question 1 is 2 marks)

2 Explain two ways Sunni and Shi'a Muslims differ in their approach to prayer times and the call to prayer, as practised in Muslim communities today.

(Total for Question 2 is 4 marks)

3 Explain the significance for community worship of differences in the adhan and mosque practice between Sunni and Shi'a communities, giving two linked points.

(Total for Question 3 is 6 marks)

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4 Explain two contrasting views on which practices best express Muslim identity, Sunni or Shi'a, and in your answer refer to the Qur'an or a hadith for one marking point as a source of wisdom and authority.

(Total for Question 4 is 5 marks)

5 Evaluate the view that differences in practice between Sunni and Shi'a Muslims are not important. In your answer you should give reasoned arguments to support this statement, give reasoned arguments to support a different point of view, refer to religious arguments, and reach a justified conclusion. Include spelling, punctuation and grammar in your assessment for up to 3 additional SPaG marks.

(Total for Question 5 is 15 marks)

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Mark scheme · 4.4 Sunni and Shi'a Differences in Islamic Practice: 30-minute Pack

Question 1

one correct difference named and briefly explained, oe	**B1**
a second correct difference named and briefly explained, oe	**B1**

Answer: E.g. Sunnis follow the Five Pillars as the main summary of duties while Shi'a often refer to the Ten Obligatory Acts; Sunnis normally keep five distinct prayer times, while many Shi'a allow combining Dhuhr with Asr and Maghrib with Isha.

Question 2

point 1: Sunnis commonly observe five distinct daily prayer times, each announced by the adhan, oe	**B1**
development 1: the adhan is sounded separately before each prayer and community mosques schedule five separate congregational times, oe	**B1**
point 2: many Shi'a communities permit combining Dhuhr with Asr and Maghrib with Isha so prayers may be offered in three main gatherings, oe	**B1**
development 2: combining is often justified for practicality and community convenience and can affect how and when the adhan is sounded in Shi'a areas, oe	**B1**

Answer: E.g. Sunnis usually keep five separate prayer times with separate adhans; many Shi'a allow combining Dhuhr with Asr and Maghrib with Isha so prayers may be performed in three main gatherings, reflecting different practical emphases.

Question 3

Level 3 A detailed answer that explains the significance of differences in adhan and mosque practice for community worship, showing how these affect identity, attendance and communal rhythms, with well-developed supporting detail.	**5-6**
Level 2 An answer that explains some relevant points about significance, with some supporting detail but less development or fewer links to community effects.	**3-4**
Level 1 One or two simple points about the adhan or mosque practice with little development.	**1-2**
Level 0 No relevant content.	**0**

Indicative content:

- Differences in the adhan, such as slightly different wording or the use of an extra phrase in some Shi'a traditions, can mark communal identity and signal belonging for worshippers.
- Where prayers are combined in Shi'a practice, mosque attendance patterns change, with fewer distinct congregational gatherings and different peak times for communal worship, affecting social life around the mosque.
- Sunnis who maintain five separate prayer times may have more frequent small congregations, reinforcing daily discipline and regular mosque presence which shapes local community rhythms.
- Both approaches can encourage devotion, but they produce different practical outcomes for mosque management, community support networks and how worship ties into daily life.

Question 4

view 1: some argue Sunni practices best express Muslim identity because the Five Pillars provide a simple, universal core emphasising the Qur'an and prophetic practice, oe	**B1**
development 1: support may be given by reference to Qur'an 2:110 which emphasises prayer and charity as central acts, linking to salat and zakah as clear public markers of Muslim worship, oe	**B1**
view 2: others argue Shi'a practices best express Muslim identity because the Ten Obligatory Acts and observances like Ashura give a distinct communal and ethical emphasis, oe	**B1**
development 2: this view points to practices such as Khums affecting community responsibilities and to public commemorations strengthening group identity, oe	**B1**
an explicit linked judgement or brief comparison that contrasts the two views, oe	**B1**

Answer: E.g. Sunni view: Five Pillars give a clear, Qur'an-linked core such as prayer and charity (Qur'an 2:110); Shi'a view: Ten Obligatory Acts and practices like Ashura provide strong communal identity and additional duties like Khums, affecting social and religious life. Conclude with a brief comparison.

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Question 5

Level 4 A well developed, balanced and informed evaluation that analyses reasons for and against the view, refers to religious arguments and evidence, and reaches a justified conclusion. Clear structure and use of relevant examples.	**10-12**
Level 3 A developed answer that offers analysis of both sides with some use of religious argument and a conclusion, but may be less thorough or balanced than the top band.	**7-9**
Level 2 An answer that gives some reasons for and against the view, with limited development and a simple conclusion or judgement.	**4-6**
Level 1 Statements relevant to the question but with little or no development and no clear conclusion.	**1-3**
Level 0 No relevant content.	**0**

Indicative content:

- Arguments supporting the view: many core practices are shared, such as belief in the importance of prayer, zakah, fasting in Ramadan, and the pilgrimage to Mecca, so everyday worship and the Five Pillars provide a strong common ground.
- Shared festivals like Id-ul-Fitr and Id-ul-Adha and common recitation of the Qur'an promote unity and mean differences in some practices do not prevent cooperation or shared worship in many contexts.
- Practical considerations lead both communities to similar moral outcomes, for example charitable giving and regular prayer shape ethical life irrespective of minor ritual differences.
- Arguments against the view: differences such as Khums versus zakah, the Ten Obligatory Acts versus Five Pillars, and the Shi'a commemoration of Ashura create distinct religious obligations and communal rhythms that matter to identity, authority and resource distribution.
- Differences in prayer timings and combining prayers affect daily routine and mosque life, and public commemorations like Ashura are central to Shi'a communal memory and can mark clear boundaries between groups.
- Religious arguments: reference to scripture or hadith may be used by both sides to justify practices, for example use of Qur'anic prescriptions for prayer and charity to defend shared duties, and hadith literature interpreted differently to support particular practices.
- A balanced conclusion should weigh unity in core worship against real, lived differences that shape community identity and practice, and may judge importance relative to context, for example local intercommunal relations or legal and charitable structures.

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