



**General Certificate of Education**

**Religious Studies (2060)**

**RSS11 Islam 2 The Life of the Prophet**

**Report on the Examination**

*2010 examination - June series*

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## General Comments

There were some excellent scripts although, as noted below, some candidates misunderstood some of the questions. Most made good use of the time available, although some AO1 answers were too brief to achieve the breadth or depth required in a really good answer. In contrast some AO2 answers were rather long.

### Question 1 *Jahiliyyah*

#### Part 01

This was a very popular question, although in part 01 some answers dealt with the social situation as much as, if not more than, the religious situation and so included a lot of irrelevant material. Good answers showed awareness of each of the differing religious groups named on the specification and points were expanded on with detail or comment. Some candidates offered very full answers concerning the religion of the Bedouin Polytheists but had little to say about Christianity, Judaism and the Hanifs, which limited the marks that could be awarded.

#### Part 02

The issue for debate in part 02 was taken directly from the specification and many candidates presented well-informed and well-structured answers. Others, however, showed a limited understanding of the statement for discussion and explained how Muhammad rejected the way of life of his time rather than the beliefs. Some candidates limited their answer to the Prophet's life before his call. The material was given credit where relevant, but this approach made it unnecessarily difficult for candidates to answer the question. The best answers showed how the Prophet rejected many of the beliefs of his day in his life and teaching but retained others, for example the monotheistic beliefs of the Hanifs. Some candidates also argued that, in his dealings with Christianity, he corrected mistaken beliefs, for example that Jesus was the son of God, rather than rejecting the religion completely. Some answers were limited to an explanation of a point of view rather than offering a debate which explored both sides of the argument. This limited the marks that could be awarded.

### Question 2 *Makkah 610-622*

#### Part 03

There were some very good answers to this part of the question, but some candidates did little more than list the main themes of the teaching. The best answers drew on material from Qur'an or Hadith to support their answers. A few candidates simply gave a narrative of the life and work of the Prophet in Makkah with very limited reference to his teaching. They seemed not to recognise what the question was looking for, even though the wording was taken directly from the specification.

#### Part 04

The issue for discussion here was taken directly from the specification. Some candidates took the word "career" to refer only to the Prophet's work as a merchant prior to his call, this made it difficult for them to build up a debate, but credit was given where possible. Most took 'career' to mean his life and teaching, which was the intended meaning, and they were able to offer a clear and full debate. Some very good answers argued that the Makkan context was very like the situation that some Muslims find themselves in today and that, as a result, everything the Prophet did in Makkah is especially relevant. In contrast many argued that his career in Makkah has limited importance when compared to his career in Madinah. The statement for discussion referred to the importance of Muhammad's career in Makkah for Islam **today**, but some answers were very general and made little reference to the present.

### **Question 3 *Madinah 622-632***

#### **Part 05**

There were some very well-informed and well-organised answers to this part of the question. The mark scheme allowed candidates to refer to both short term and long term challenges and many answers successfully combined reference to the practical difficulties of settling in alongside reference to opposition from Hypocrites, Jews and the Quraysh of Makkah. Some candidates spent less time explaining the problems than showing how they were solved, and such answers included much irrelevant material. A few candidates simply described the life and work of Muhammad in Madinah and did not focus on the question asked.

#### **Part 06**

There were some very good answers to part 06. Many candidates were able to debate the conflicting claims of Makkah and Madinah to be the birthplace of Islam and the Muslim community; others argued that while Islam began with Adam, the first truly Islamic society was that ruled by the Prophet in Madinah when God's rules for the community were finally revealed.

### **Question 4 *The death of the Prophet and after***

#### **Part 07**

This was the least popular question, but there were some very well-informed answers to part 07. Some candidates, however, simply described some of the main events after Muhammad's death rather than explaining how and why Shi'a Islam developed. The most relevant answers started with a sentence like 'Shi'a Islam emerged because of a dispute about who should lead the community' rather than 'After the Prophet's death there was a meeting...'.

#### **Part 08**

There were some thoughtful answers to part 08, many of which concentrated on the continuing importance of the battle of Karbala and the martyrdom of Imam Husayn for Shi'a Muslims. Others, however, did not focus on the importance of the events, but on Shi'a Islam in general and there was little to credit in such answers. Some very good answers argued that the actual events are not important because no one can be certain what really happened, others that the actual events are vital because they reveal the status and authority of the Shi'a Imams.