



**General Certificate of Education (A-level)  
January 2011**

**Religious Studies**

**RSS11**

**(Specification 2060)**

**Unit L Islam 2 *The Life of the Prophet***

***Report on the Examination***

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## General Comments

All the questions were tackled and there were some pleasing answers which showed clear evidence of both close analysis of the question and of planning. However, there were also answers which were too general and not properly focused on what the question asked. A very few candidates answered all the questions on the paper and in one case the candidate did not separate out the answers to the two parts of the question. It is essential that candidates tackle each part separately and put the appropriate question number (e.g.01 or 02) at the beginning of their answer.

### Question 1

- 01** There were some good responses to this very popular question, and most candidates covered both the religious and the social situation as required. Some simply listed things that could be found at the time e.g. drunkenness and gambling and, as a result, their answers were simply summaries or descriptions. Such answers could not score highly. Some answers included broad, and only partly accurate, generalisations, giving the impression that, for example, all female children were killed at birth and all women were disrespected and treated shamefully. More balanced answers used examples such as the Prophet's wife to show that this was not always the case. When dealing with the religious situation, many were able to outline or describe the beliefs of various groups. Better answers also considered the attitude to idol worship evident among the Quraysh, including the idea that they expected something in return for their offerings.
- 02** This issue raised by this question is one of the issues arising identified on the Specification and candidates were expected to have considered it prior to the examination. Many focused on the idea that Makkah was a centre of influence and that in order to preach in Makkah, Muhammad had to be from the Quraysh and have the protection of his clan. Some however simply considered the importance of Makkah and not of his birth to a family within the ruling tribe. There were many successful counter-arguments which often centred on Makkah's rejection of Muhammad.

### Question 2

- 03** The best answers to this popular question focused on the reasons why Muhammad left Makkah and the reasons why he went to Madinah. In contrast the weakest answers simply outlined events in the Prophet's career between 610 and 622 with little specific attention to the question. Some candidates explained why he left Makkah and gave no account of why it was Madinah he went to: others simply described the persecution Muhammad and the Muslims faced in Makkah. Some gave information without explaining its significance: for example many knew that when Abu Talib died Muhammad lost his clan protection, but very few explained the implications of this. A few candidates went on to consider events that took place after Muhammad's arrival in Madinah, although these were not required by the question.
- 04** Some of the best answers to this question focused on the reasons people such as Abu Lahab might have had for rejecting Muhammad and considered religious, social, political and economic factors. Some argued that the main reason was the threat to Makkah's status as a centre of pilgrimage, and therefore as a centre of trade, others that it was the challenge to the tradition of the ancestors. There was very limited reference to evidence from Muhammad's life, or from the Qur'an, which could support the various ideas, and this meant that while candidates could offer alternative suggestions they could offer few reasons to choose between them. Some scholars, for example, point out that Makkah tolerated other monotheists which suggests they were not actually hostile to the belief in one God, and that they attacked Muhammad for other reasons.

### **Question 3**

- 05** Many of the few candidates who tackled this question simply outlined the Prophet's career in Madinah, and gave accounts of the various battles, without paying specific attention to how they led up to the conquest of Makkah. The best answers explained the shift in power and influence from Makkah to Madinah between 622 and 628, and why Makkah was prepared to make a treaty with Muhammad in 628. They then considered events when that treaty was broken.
- 06** Some of the candidates successfully argued that Muhammad's struggles with, and eventual conquest of, Makkah, and the fact that it was made the direction of prayer and the focus for pilgrimage, showed that it was important to him throughout his career. Only some, however, could offer reasons why Madinah may have been more important at times. The best answers pointed out that Muhammad did not stay in Makkah after the conquest but returned to Madinah and that it was Madinah not Makkah that was the first Muslim city and role model for future Muslim societies.

### **Question 4**

- 07** There were very few answers to this question, but, in general, those who did choose to answer it gave well-informed answers. However, some candidates only outlined the problems and did not consider how the Umma responded to them.
- 08** The answers to this question were generally well-informed. Most candidates successfully argued that knowledge of the Prophet's life was essential to Muslims because of the importance of his Sunna. Some provided counter-arguments and these generally focused on doubts that the record of Muhammad's life were accurate, or questions about whether he was infallible as a man, and about the relevance of his example for today.

### **Mark Ranges and Award of Grades**

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