



**General Certificate of Education (A-level)
January 2012**

Religious Studies

RSS11

(Specification 2060)

Unit L Islam 2 *The Life of the Prophet*

Report on the Examination

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General Comments

Almost all students answered the two questions required and very few appeared to run out of time. There were some very well informed answers, but they did not always score highly because they did not always use the information to answer the question set. At times it was not clear that all students had recognised the vocabulary used in the specification, e.g. 'concept' (question 01), 'role' (question 02) and 'nature' (question 07). This vocabulary is often used in questions and it is important for students to be familiar with the terms used.

Some students were writing quite lengthy introductions to their answers. These may have been useful if they helped them to focus on the question set, but in most cases they did not earn any marks. This meant that on some scripts, when students wrote a fairly long introduction to each part, almost a quarter of what was written was not worth any marks.

Question 1 *Jahiliyyah*

01 This was a very popular question. There were some well informed descriptions of the situation in and around Makkah when Muhammad began his work but the question focused on the meaning of the concept of Jahiliyyah and, on the whole, very little attention was paid to that concept. It is possible that not all students recognised the term 'concept', even though it is used in the specification, or realised exactly what the question was asking them to do. This greatly limited the marks that could be awarded.

The best answers did not just describe what the people believed and did, but explained why those beliefs and actions showed ignorance according to the teaching of Islam. They explained, for example, that some people worshipped idols because they had forgotten the teaching brought by Abraham, some followed the way of the ancestors rather than the path of God and others had distorted the scriptures. Many of the accounts of the situation at the time gave information that could have been used to explain the meaning of jahiliyyah, but few actually applied it to the question set.

02 Some students discussed the importance of the **time** of jahiliyyah rather than the concept of jahiliyyah which limited the marks that could be awarded. Some argued that the idea was of little importance because there were clear signs that jahiliyyah continued today, which meant that Muslims were ignoring the message of the past. Others used the same evidence to argue that the concept was important because it would help Muslims to understand what was wrong about what they were doing. Both approaches were creditworthy, depending, of course, on how well the case was made.

Question 2 *Makkah 610-622 CE*

03 This was another popular question. Many students were able to give a clear outline of the call of Muhammad, but some wrote far more than necessary. The second part of the task was often done less well. Some students simply outlined the rest of Muhammad's career in Makkah, with little or no attention to his role. The best answers stated what his role was, e.g. messenger, warner and perfect example, and then gave examples to explain what these roles were.

04 There were some very good answers to this question, but some of them were over-long. Students should allocate their time and effort in proportion to the marks available. The AO2 section is worth only half the marks of the AO1 section but answers were often much the same length. Students should be aware that maximum marks can be awarded to short, focused, arguments.

Many students drew on the evidence in the Qur'an that supports this claim and knew that some people had ridiculed Muhammad and called him mad. The reactions of his wife and other early converts were then used to argue that some people did take him seriously. Others argued that it was his message, rather than his call, that meant people could not take him seriously. This was

also a valid approach to the question. A number of students did not argue their case and instead simply stated a point of view.

Question 3 *Madinah 622-632 CE*

05 There were some good answers here. Students were clearly aware of many positive opportunities the hijrah presented to the Muslim emigrants and usually based their answers on the contrast between the situations in Makkah and Madinah. Most were also aware of the challenges it presented, particularly those related to making a living and with dealing with opposition from the Jews, hypocrites and Makkans. A few showed a clear understanding of the impact of giving up tribal and clan membership for membership of the Umma. Less effective answers tended to simply describe the main events between 622 and 632 without clear reference to the question.

06 The best answers generally argued that the example set by the emigrants is important today, balanced by the general view that knowledge of events in Islamic history was far less important than knowledge of the teaching of Islam. Most students knew that the Islamic calendar starts from the hijrah, but many did not explain why it is seen as such a significant turning point in the development of Islam. Some wrote about the importance of the Madinan period in general when compared with the Makkan period; others stated opinions, for example stating that Islam would not have survived had the Hijrah not taken place, without offering any evidence or argument in support.

Question 4 *The death of the Prophet and after*

07 This was the least popular of the questions. Most students who answered it described the events after Muhammad's death and did not focus on the nature of the Umma, which meant that they could not score highly. Some did mention different groups within the Umma e.g. the Ansar, Muhajirun and those who had only become part of the community when Makkah was conquered, and some showed some awareness of the nature of the relationship between them. The vocabulary of the question came straight from the specification, but it was not clear that all students realised what the question was asking.

08 There were some good answers to this question which considered how far the unity of Islam had suffered after Muhammad's death. Students generally referred to the emergence of Shi'a Islam and the Ridda wars as evidence of divisions and to the continued existence of Islam as evidence that the Umma had continued.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

Grade boundaries and cumulative percentage grades are available on the [Results statistics](#) page of the AQA Website.

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