

ISLAMIYAT

GCE Ordinary Level

Paper 2058/01

Paper 1

General comments

There was the usual range of performance in the examination this year.

As in previous years, many candidates failed to read questions properly and to answer the questions set. Instead, they tended to give a general account of the major topic, of which the question refers to only a part. An example is some answers to **Question 4 (a)**, which asked about the events that *immediately* led up to the *hijra*. Candidates had to decide exactly where the narrative of events should begin, and some chose one point, some another. But a significant minority gave accounts of the whole of the Prophet's career from the first experience of revelation onwards, while others narrated the *hijra* itself and the Prophet's arrival at Medina. The wording of the question prompted them to think about the points at which to begin and end their accounts, but these candidates clearly did not. Another example came in answers to **Question 6 (a)(ii)**, in which a number of candidates described 'Uthman's activities during the Prophet's lifetime, when the wording in the question "... during the periods when they were caliphs" expressly ruled this out.

Another familiar reason for poor performance was the tendency to write in general terms rather than construct precise accounts of the items referred to in the question. An example came in answers to **Question 5 (a)(iii)**, on the teachings of Islam about the position of women as daughters. A good number of candidates described at length the pre-Islamic Arab practice of burying female babies without commenting on the difference that Islam made or relating this practice to Islamic teachings about daughters. This fault arises from hurrying over the answers and not pausing to think about what a relevant and precise answer should and should not contain.

Surprisingly, many candidates appeared to lack factual knowledge in certain areas. This was evident mainly in some answers to **Question 2**, where candidates did not know what the underlined words and phrases referred to, in answers to parts of **Question 7**, where candidates confused Arafat with Mina, and most noticeably in answers to **Question 6**, where some candidates did not appear to possess the basic facts about the caliphates of Abu Bakr and 'Uthman.

Finally, many candidates did not manage their time properly: they often gave long and over-elaborate answers to **Questions 1, 2 and 3** (writing generally and not always on the point that was being asked), and then had no time for answers in **Section B** or **Section C**.

Teachers in their lessons surely attempt to avoid all these shortcomings. It may be worth reminding them once again to advise candidates that the Examiners look for precision and thoughtfulness – precision in answers to factual and descriptive questions, and thoughtfulness in answers to evaluative questions. Maybe the best advice they can give is that candidates should first of all read through the paper and think about exactly what each question is asking, and then as they give their answers to refer back repeatedly to the question to check that they are keeping to the points asked for and have not strayed into points that the question has ruled out.

Comments on Specific Questions

Question 1

While candidates were usually able to identify the passages with ease, they did not always find it so easy to comment on their contexts and main teachings. The contexts of passages are not always straightforward to discuss. In passage **(a)** it was the appearance of the angel Gabriel to Mary (candidates could gain two easy marks by naming the characters) in the temple, to reassure her and announce the birth of a son, while in **(b)**, a little less straightforwardly, it was the general theme repeated throughout the Qur'an of the oneness and transcendence of God. Answers that referred to this main teaching about *tawhid* and maybe referred to such key texts as the Verse of the Throne, which is in the syllabus, would have gained high marks.

A number of answers to **(a)** gave long descriptions of the parents of Mary and her birth and childhood. This is not the context of this passage, but part of the biography of one of its main characters. If these candidates had instead commented briefly that Mary was alone in the temple because her parents had dedicated her to God, they would have been much more on the point.

Most candidates were able to give the main teachings of their chosen passage, but many resorted to simple summary of the verses set rather than picking out major themes. There is a significant difference between these, because while summarising merely involves some comprehension of the contents of the passage, giving the main teachings shows awareness of how these passages contribute to the whole body of Islamic beliefs. For example, while in **(a)** a point of summary would be to say that Gabriel announced that Mary would give birth to Jesus without being approached by a man, a major teaching here would be that God can achieve his purposes by any means he chooses, and gave Jesus to Mary without the recognised means of sexual intercourse.

Question 2

The marking scheme allocates 3 marks for comments on each underlined word or phrase, usually 1 for simple identification, 1 for saying what it means in its context, and 1 for saying why the item is important in Islam. Thus, for example, a good answer to *place of Abraham* in **(a)** would have identified this as a stone in the enclosure near the ka'ba, have explained that it is believed to be the spot where Abraham stood when he was rebuilding the ka'ba, and have said that pilgrims should pray here after circumambulating the ka'ba.

There were some very complete answers to this question, in which candidates clearly showed comprehensive knowledge and understanding of the passages. Common mistakes included: thinking that the *place of Abraham* was the ka'ba itself, and that *Your Lord has not forsaken you* is addressed to all Muslims, even though in the Arabic the "you" is singular.

Question 3

As usual, this question produced some of the best answers; many candidates wrote fully about the points concerning both belief and action, and supported their answers with verses from the Qur'an or other Hadiths. A typical good answer to, for example Hadith **(g)**, "Purity is half of faith", would have said first that Islamic belief is demonstrated by acts of purity, would then have given examples of this (physical purity before prayer, purity of attitude towards other people), and thirdly would have said that good actions are as important as sound beliefs.

It is not necessary to write long comments on each Hadith; most candidates should be able to discuss it fully in half to three quarters of a side.

Question 4

In **(a)** the main problem is, where to begin the account? The best answers began with the boycott, the deaths of Khadija and Abu Talib, the Prophet's visit to Ta'if, and gave detailed descriptions of his meetings with the pilgrims from Yathrib, referring to the numbers of pilgrims on each occasion and what took place. These answers gained their marks by giving full accounts and precise details of what occurred in the few years between the boycott and the *hijra*.

Good answers to **(b)** will have identified three good reasons and explained each reason in full – for example, that the Prophet himself remained in Mecca until he received divine permission to leave, even though he sent his followers on ahead.

Question 5

This question was generally answered well, with most candidates being able to write briefly about women in the three roles asked about, and also being able to talk knowledgeably about the relationship between the sexes. The best answers gave the main points as asked in each part and also supported their comments from the Qur'an and Prophet's life.

It should be remembered that the marking scheme often gives marks for quotations from the Qur'an or Hadith, or examples from the life of the Prophet. But when candidates use these they should take care to link them with the point they are making. It is no good simply giving lists of verses or Hadiths without comment; a much better approach is to give one or two and explain how these support or clarify the point that is being made. For example, in **Question 5 (a)(ii)** a very relevant Hadith is "Heaven lies at mothers' feet", but simple quotation of this is not enough, and simply saying something like 'We should respect our mothers because they are the way to heaven, as the Prophet says "Heaven lies at mothers' feet" shows no understanding of what the Hadith means. This Hadith should be used to illustrate comments about, for example, the importance of mothers in bringing up children and educating them to know good and bad, and so being linked in with important points about the role of mothers.

Question 6

As said above, many candidates who attempted this question did not appear to know adequately what these two caliphs accomplished. Often they seemed to confuse one or other with 'Umar, and some actually wrote about 'Umar, referring to him by name. There was also some general difficulty with part (b).

Good answers to part (a) referred to the main events of the two caliphs' rules, particularly the wars against the false prophets and withholders of *zakat*, as well as the first collection of the Qur'an under Abu Bakr, and the expansion of Islam and full collection of the Qur'an under 'Uthman. Marks were given both for accounts of the general events and for details such as names and dates.

Good answers to part (b) explained the reasons why three achievements of either caliph were important. This required candidates to think about what they had written in (a) and to show they understood the significance of this. A mark was given for a clear reference to the importance of an event, and a further mark for a full discussion of its importance.

Question 7

This was a very popular question, though some candidates seemed to be under the impression that they could earn marks without thinking carefully about what it was asking. The rubric states: "Give a brief explanation of the importance of each of the following in Muslim beliefs and practices". The key words "importance", "beliefs" and "practices" should make candidates realise that it is not enough to identify these four items, because high marks will only be given for full explanations of how they feature in what Muslims believe and do. Thus, a good answer to (a) would mention the importance of the ka'ba as the first and most important place where God was worshipped, would mention its association with Adam, Abraham and Isma'il, would comment on its importance in Muslim prayer, and would describe its significance in the pilgrimage.

This question offered candidates an opportunity of gaining high marks, but only if they thought about it and took care to write precise answers.

Question 8

This was another question that may have seemed easy but did in fact require some thought to answer well. Again, the rubric wording, "What does a Muslim understand by the following", gives the lead, by prompting candidates to think about the importance of the four items in Muslim beliefs rather than simply to identify them. Most candidates were able to say something about each of the four, but many missed points that a little thought would have supplied. For example, in (a) nearly all said that this refers to God, and many then went on to write in general terms about his greatness and power. Few were able to explain that it is because of his power that Muslims can turn to him and be confident of help, and fewer still mentioned the importance of depending only on God and no other being. These points are not difficult to identify, but they do require a little thought.

Question 9 – see **Question 7**.

Question 10 – see **Question 8**.

Question 11

There were very few answers to this question, as to **Section C** in general. Good attempts would have combined descriptions and explanations in each part, in (a) describing briefly the strife between 'Ali and the two Companions and explaining the reasons for this from 'Ali's point of view; in (b) describing the events that led Husayn to make his journey and what happened on the way and explaining why he thought it important to take this step; and in (c) describing the ways in which respect is shown for Fatima and explaining why Shi'is hold her in this great respect.

Note: In preparation for the first examination of the new syllabus in Summer 2003, Teachers are advised to read carefully through the new syllabus, and to look closely at the two sample Question Papers that accompany it. There are many hints about studying effectively and answering questions successfully.