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FOREWORD

This booklet contains reports written by Examiners on the work of candidates in certain papers. **Its contents are primarily for the information of the subject teachers concerned.**

ISLAMIYAT

GCE Ordinary Level

Papers 2058/01 and 2058/02

Paper 1 and Paper 2

General comments

Many of the observations made about recent Islamiyat examinations can be made about these. Some candidates were clearly well prepared by the teaching and guidance they had been given, knew exactly what to do in the examination, and did it very well. In addition to learning facts about the topics, they had evidently been made to think in class about them, and demonstrated a command of the material they were discussing as well as confidence in their judgements.

Other candidates, however, showed many of the failings that have been noted in the past. They seemed not to read the questions closely, misunderstood what the questions were asking, and did not show thorough knowledge and understanding of some topics about which they wrote.

The questions in the papers are carefully prepared to test knowledge and understanding, usually by including a descriptive part **(a)** and an evaluative part **(b)**. So candidates can only gain high marks by being ready both to know the facts and also to show they understand them. An example is **Question 4** in Paper 2058/02. In part **(a)** this asks for an account of the main events of the caliphates of either 'Umar or 'Ali, and in **(b)** for an explanation of why one of these caliphs was important in Islamic history. In **(a)** candidates could gain high marks by giving a straightforward description of what took place during the chosen caliphate, though they had to decide what the main events were. Then in **(b)** they could gain further marks by suggesting reasons why either caliph was significant. In **(a)** they had to recall learnt facts; in **(b)** they had to use their factual knowledge to make evaluations.

The candidates who did well in **(a)** included in their answers the required facts connected with the caliphate. But others interpreted this part as a biography of the caliph and started their answer with his early years and companionship of the Prophet. Given the precise wording of the question, it is difficult to see how they could do this unless they had not been shown how to make use of what they had learnt about the caliph and simply thought that any mention of him in a question meant they should write all they knew about him.

Likewise, candidates who did well in **(b)** highlighted either the main achievements of 'Umar's reign or the drastic disagreements of 'Ali's time. But other candidates simply summarised the events they had already described in **(a)** without showing they knew why these pointed to the caliph's importance. They appeared unprepared to answer a question split into descriptive and evaluative parts, and did not appreciate what the forms of wording in the question were requiring them to do.

Teachers who want their candidates to gain more than average marks are advised to explain what questions of this kind are really asking. Firstly, they should show candidates how to read the question carefully in order to understand exactly what it requires. And secondly, they should give them practice in making use of factual knowledge in order to select particular points and apply them in their answers. In this way they will be helping candidates to understand as well as know the contents of the syllabus.

2058/01

General comments

The two compulsory questions, **Questions 1** and **2**, were generally well answered. Many candidates were able to detect the main points of teaching in the Qur'an passages in **Question 1**, and the majority showed thorough knowledge of the Prophet's two battles in **Question 2**. Fewer answered **Question 3** well, missing out a number of important features of congregational prayer, though many who attempted **Question 4** gave good answers to both parts.

It is clear from the majority of answers that most candidates are given all the facts they need for the examination, though, as has been pointed out above, it is also clear that many would benefit from practice in using these facts to answer questions such as **Question 2 (b)** and **3 (b)**, where they have to give judgements and explanations.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

Here candidates are asked to give succinct comments on the main teachings of the passages set, not to summarise them or describe their contexts or backgrounds unless these are directly relevant to the teachings they contain. Thus, the task before the candidates is to detect the main teachings of Islam that are represented in various forms in the passages.

In **(a)** most candidates were able to name the two locations of the mosques, though not all named the mosques themselves, and some went into unnecessarily long accounts of the Prophet's journey through the heavens, although this is not directly referred to in the passage. The best answers identified the two mosques and their locations, and commented briefly on what is meant by 'our signs', and what this implies about the power and will of God.

In **(b)** a number of candidates went into unnecessary details about the parents of Mary, and some thought that the messenger had come to Mary's mother (one or two thought this messenger had come to the Prophet Muhammad). The best answers focused on the identity of the messenger, Mary's dismay at his news and the way in which his reassuring answer indicates the great power of God.

In **(c)** most candidates were able to comment on what the passage suggests about the reassuring power of God. The best answers explained how he is a safe refuge against evil and gave details about the forms of evil mentioned in the Sura.

Question 2

The majority of candidates appeared to know a great deal about these two battles, and many scored highly in part **(a)**. The best answers carefully described what happened in the battles, and included such details as their dates and the names of leading individuals whose actions are remembered.

There were some excellent answers to **(b)**, containing comments on the religious and economic reasons for the hostility of the Meccans to the Prophet and their fears for their own position in Arabia. Most candidates were able to give some reasons for the enmity based on religious differences.

Question 3

Part **(a)** asked for precise accounts of the congregational prayers on Fridays and invited candidates to emphasise the features that distinguish these communal prayers from others. Most candidates mentioned that they take place in a mosque and that worshippers bathe and put on clean clothes. But it was surprising how many other details were missed, such as the recommendation to hurry to the mosque, the sermon in two parts (or two sermons), filling up the lines of worshippers and performing the prayers in time with the imam. In questions of this kind, which may seem straightforward, candidates should give precise accounts based on careful consideration of all the details the description should contain.

In **(b)** many candidates were able to identify some differences between the two forms of prayer, and some candidates gave thorough accounts of how *salat* must be performed at set times, in a particular way and always in Arabic, while *du'a'* is less formal and can be said at any time. More candidates could have gained higher marks than they did by thinking carefully about features of these types of prayer they knew well but had maybe not compared before.

Question 4

Most candidates who attempted this question did well. In **(a)** they clearly knew the main stages in the compilation of the Qur'an, as well as the parts played by such major individuals as the caliphs Abu Bakr, 'Umar, 'Uthman, and above all, Zayd Ibn Thabit. But many seemed to think that the main compilation was made under Abu Bakr, while under 'Uthman only copies of this were necessary. This reverses the usually accepted accounts that the most thorough and careful compilation was made under 'Uthman by Zayd and others, making use of the earlier compilation.

2058/02

General comments

In this paper **Questions 1 and 2** were generally answered well, and there were also some good attempts at **Question 4**. But **Question 5** was less well answered, and **Question 3** seemed to present problems for the majority of candidates, who either misread it or appeared unable to give suitable examples from the Qur'an and life of the Prophet.

Comments on specific questions**Question 1**

In order to answer this question properly, candidates must know what the passage means in general and also what all its parts mean. For this, they must study the passage in Arabic. In the examination they must be able to explain the teaching that each of their seven chosen passages contains, and the significance of this teaching as a part of the general teachings of Islam.

Candidates need to comment briefly on the actual phrases underlined, rather than the passage as a whole or its context (such comments are more appropriate to Paper 2058/01 **Question 1**). The best answers discussed the meaning of each phrase, as it is determined by the passage, and also its importance within the faith of Islam. Others sometimes gave paraphrases of the phrases without making comments on their meaning, or gave general comments unrelated to the phrases themselves.

In **(a)** many candidates did not appear to know that the passage is addressed to a single person (who is, of course, identified as the Prophet Muhammad), which means that they cannot have studied it in Arabic, where singular and plural forms of 'you' are clearly distinguished. As a result, they made general comments about God not deserting believers and making the future or heaven better than the present (phrases 2 and 3), rather than showing how these can be related to the Prophet's own experiences and then to Muslims in general. While there were some accurate discussions of the phrases in this *Sura*, there were also some disappointingly vague ones as well.

Answers to phrases in **(b)** were on the whole good. Most candidates appeared to know what the 'calamity' is (phrase 7) and how it refers to a time of chaos as disaster at the end of the world, and were also able to make suitable comments about the meaning and importance of the other phrases here. It seems they had generally been prepared more thoroughly on this *Sura* than the other.

Question 2

In order to do well in this question candidates should be able to identify two aspects of each Hadith: its teachings on Muslim belief and action. Thus, for example, in answering Hadith **(a)** in the question paper, 'Actions are judged by intentions', they should explain the importance of the thought or motivation behind someone's action, and then comment on the way in which people look for the reason why he or she performed the action. They may do this in a number of ways, such as giving examples from the Prophet's life or from their own experience, or by quoting suitable verses from the Qur'an. The importance is to say something about both aspects of the teaching in the Hadith.

Most candidates did well in this question, though a number had clearly learnt model answers rather than think about the Hadith for themselves. The best answers were concise – no longer than half or two-thirds of a page – and often included quotations from the Qur'an or other Hadith to illustrate their points.

Some answers were far too long. Considering that each Hadith in this question carries a maximum of two marks, candidates should be careful not to take too long over each answer. There was evidence in this examination that a few had spent so long on this and **Question 1** that they left themselves no time to finish the other questions.

Question 3

This question seemed to present difficulties, and not many candidates answered it well. It referred to **(a)** Muslim individuals and **(b)** Muslim communities, and asked candidates to say how the teachings of the Qur'an and example of the Prophet guided their lives. Many candidates thought that the question was about the importance of the Qur'an and Prophet's biography, and repeated comments about the centrality of these sources in individual and communal living. But if they had read the question carefully and thought about it, they would have seen that this was not its point. Other candidates who did grasp the point seemed unable to provide examples from the Qur'an and *Sira*, though if they only thought of the passages required for study in the syllabus they would have found ample material there.

Candidates who gave good answers showed how individuals are guided to recognise the importance of God in all they do, to have respect for the purity of their own thoughts and actions, and to be honourable in their relations with others. They supported their arguments with quotations from the Qur'an, or a story from the Prophet's *Sira*, or maybe a Hadith.

They went on to show how communities are built on trustworthy relationships within families and between neighbours, and how the leaders of the community show the same responsibility to community members as the Prophet. The best answers added to these further comments about relations between communities, both Muslim and non-Muslim, again based on the way in which the Qur'an teaches about the duties of the Muslim community and the way the Prophet's community at Medina dealt with others.

This was a question that required some thought before answering, and it did not include a part that asked straightforwardly for descriptive accounts. Many candidates evidently did not stop to think and plan their answers, did not refer to the Qur'an and Hadith passages they had learnt, and as a result lost the chance to gain marks.

Question 4

Some comments have already been made about answers to this question (see **General comments** earlier). In **(a)** most candidates who wrote about 'Umar displayed an impressive amount of knowledge of the territorial conquests under him and were able to gain high marks by giving details of battles, dates and places conquered. Those who were also able to comment on his organisational arrangements within the empire gained high marks in this part.

Candidates who wrote on 'Ali in **(a)** also usually knew about the difficulties he encountered and the internal strife within the empire in his time. The best answers detailed the events surrounding the battle of the Camel, the battle of Siffin and the break-up among his supporters following the latter. Strangely, some answers stated that he was the last caliph; while he is known as the last of the Righty-Guided Caliphs, he was among the first in a long line that stretched for many centuries through Islamic history.

A noticeable absence from answers was any comment about 'Ali from a Shi'a perspective (which was part of the purpose of including 'Ali in the question). Such comments would have vindicated his actions against all the criticisms he received.

This absence of a Shi'i perspective was also noticeable in **(b)** in the answers which commented on 'Ali. In fact, many answers here gave details already provided in **(a)** or mentioned events from the life of 'Umar or 'Ali during the lifetime of the Prophet.

Good answers to **(b)** discussed such elements as 'Umar as a model organiser in government and fair ruler, or 'Ali as a leader who inspired strong loyalty and also strong disloyalty. But there were not many of these.

Question 5

This was not well answered in general, mainly because candidates who attempted it did not appreciate that in **(a)** they were asked for explanation, and in **(b)** and **(c)** they were asked for descriptions. This was another case of having to read the question closely in order to see exactly what was being asked. A number of candidates also seemed to think that the Scribes of the Prophet were not human beings but the scriptures he left. Again, an attentive reading of **(b)**, which asks candidates to outline 'the work they carried out', should have given a clear indication that the question was asking about human beings and not written texts.

Many answers to **(a)** gave a description of what the scribes did rather than refer to their importance. Good answers identified some of the leading individuals and went on to say how they preserved the revelations given to the Prophet in written form.

Good answers to **(b)** gave details of how the scribes attended the Prophet and wrote down what he received, and mentioned the materials they used. Finally, good answers to **(c)**, which incidentally was often the best answered part of the question, gave brief details about the work of the best-known scribe and his careful collection of the Qur'an under the first caliphs.