

Examiners' Report

GCE O Level Islamiyat (7568)

June 2006

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ISLAMİYAT 7568, CHIEF EXAMINER'S REPORT

General Comments

Entries again increased (by over 25% compared with June 2005) and nearly twice as many centres were involved. About half the students from one centre were Shi'ah candidates and the quality of the Shi'ah scripts was again impressive, comparing favourably with the best Sunni scripts.

The format of the question paper was similar to previous years and many responses achieved a high standard. Section One responses achieved very high marks (full marks in some instances); both questions 5 and 7 in Section Two produced confident, high-scoring responses, while questions 13 and 14 in Section Three also scored well. Other parts of the paper were less successful. Overall the marks achieved reflected the hard work of all concerned and the high quality of the majority of scripts, the new centres performing particularly well.

Section 1

Question 1

(a) This was the least popular of the three Surahs. Some candidates struggled with part (ii), just saying that Allah was "light in darkness", nor was "worship Allah" or "keep away from temptation" sufficient in part (iii). Most, however, produced suitable suggestions.

(b) In (i), some just quoted "mountains will be like carded wool" without further explanation. Some wrongly suggested the evildoers as the answer to part (iii).

(c) Some incorrectly wrote "in the heavens" in answer to (i). Others found (iii) difficult to answer succinctly.

Question 2

(a) Most candidates answered (i) correctly but some put "Islam" or "Allah's path through life". The key word in (ii) was 'worldwide', i.e., all Muslims, a point missed by some.

(b)(i) Ibrahim and Ismail were wrongly quoted by some; fortunately the majority opted for Adam.

(c) The least popular choice, yet those who attempted it appeared to find no difficulty in giving sensible answers.

(d)(i) Some gave the little story confirming the Prophet's Mi'raj. This was not required.

(e) Nearly everyone answered (i) correctly but a few wrote "giving food regularly": an occasion was required. Again most got (ii) right, even though some wrote a half-page resume of the conquest.

Question 3

(a) Part (i) was well expressed and well known. Answering (ii), many candidates could quote the Prophet's words.

(b) Almost 100% of candidates knew part (i). Part (ii) was also well answered - there were lots of sensible suggestions.

(c) There were no problems here, apart from a little vagueness about “place” rather than “school” or “institution”.

(d) Competently answered in both its parts.

(e) This question was rarely answered but gave no problems to those who chose it.

Section 2

Question 4

The account of the Prophet’s call, apart from his commission to teach others, was well reported. The ways in which Muslims celebrate the occasion were also known, sometimes in great detail, but then these ways were not linked as they should have been to show their **significance** to the event recorded in (a). There were therefore many scripts (including the best) with just three or four marks instead of six. Surprisingly, no one mentioned festival celebrations when discussing ‘past events’ in part (c). Examples generally were in short supply and, when given, mainly related to battles, e.g. trusting Allah for Badr and obedience/greed for the archers at Uhud. Alternative suggestions and reasons are shown in the mark scheme.

Question 5

A whole page was often written on the lead up to the boycott and then little on the boycott itself, but most managed the three years’ suffering and the hunger. The visit to Ta’if was very well known – nearly all had the Prophet with blood in his shoes and most included the prayer for clemency at the end. There were pages written on (b): some candidates mistakenly referred to Islamic teachings about equality, which did not arise till Madinah. There were some impassioned answers to part (c), often very interesting, including the view that to become a terrorist or suicide bomber is against the principles of Islam. Condemnation of Western culture was a common theme.

Question 6

This question was quite popular but badly handled, especially in part (b). Here candidates wrote about the Jews fighting in the battles in the front line against the Muslims, raping Muslim girls, etc. Some, however, correctly described the Jews plotting with the Quraish, not fighting nor helping to defend Madinah but working in an underhand, nefarious way. On the whole, candidates knew enough to answer (b)(ii) but information was often hidden in a page of detail and had to be teased out by the examiners. In part (c) the majority went down the wrong track, limiting their answers to the idea of uniting against the non-Muslims despite the fact that the word ‘universal’ was printed in bold letters on the question paper. Those who started from the concept of **all** people being the children of Adam did much better.

Question 7

This question was well answered, especially in its discussion of fard and haram. Under mandub, actions were often listed without comment; generally there was too much prayer. Sometimes the point of (b) – the **importance** of obedience – was missed, but the best scripts did consider Allah’s requirements, deterrence to potential law-breakers and the dangers to health of haram food.

Question 8

This question was not answered very often and candidates seemed to find it difficult. Some wrote a detailed account of the conquest (not required) and stopped there. Then candidates could not answer part (b) properly as they chose examples from the conquest (often the phrase ‘this period’ was ignored). For many, the quotation in

part (c) appeared to be over their heads, although nothing particularly abstruse or obscure was needed to score marks: the few who answered it well showed how it should be done.

Section 3

Question 9

A number of candidates did not write much (if anything) about the use of the Qur'an in worship, preferring instead to talk about its value as a code of life. It is not clear why there was a difficulty here. Weaker candidates got the wrong end of the stick in (b), writing about **how** (keeping on high shelf, etc.) rather than **why** (word of Allah, etc.) the Qur'an is respected. Nearly all answered well in (c), writing confidently about the characteristics of Allah and generally scoring high marks.

Question 10

The Qur'an only tended to be used for the actual punishments (e.g. death for murder, cutting of hand for theft, lashes or stoning for adultery) and the rest was social comment (e.g. it is not right to take people's possessions). The reference to blood money was often mentioned in (a)(i) and was cross-credited, as it really belonged to part (b), which tended to be answered as 'if murder was done unintentionally it could be forgiven'. Only a minority mentioned the need for witnesses to the act of adultery. Answers to part (c) reflected discussions about justice in class: perhaps the most important point here is that Allah Himself is Just: therefore His subjects should try to copy Him.

Question 11

Not many answered this question but those who did had obviously covered the topic and responded to (a) well. Part (b) was also well answered, particularly on the collection, but candidates were less sure about its importance, although some used a common sense approach. All answered part (c) in detail about the value of hadith and sunnah in explaining and supporting the Qur'an, sometimes including the use of ijma and qiyas as well.

Question 12

This question was not tackled very often but both the collection and distribution of zakah were known, sometimes in great detail, especially regarding a Muslim's disposable income. Some of the points listed in the mark scheme under (b) and (c) were known: there was room for cross-credit here and in a number of cases this approach was adopted, so that any valid point earned a mark.

Question 13

Those who answered this question knew Uthman's achievements very well and often scored maximum marks in part (a). Some were less secure in their (b) answers, introducing characteristics unrelated to (a), e.g. his weakness in appointing the wrong governors. Unfortunately, a number wrongly limited their (c) answers to Uthman rather than the Khalifah in general - a matter presumably of careless question reading.

Question 14

This was a very popular question and on the whole well answered. Details about Khadijah and Aishah were particularly well known and many candidates scored full marks in their responses to part (a). Performances in part (b) were less sure but in most cases still earned at least half marks. Discussions in (c) sometimes drifted away from 'wives' to discussion of the status of women in general. Many comments here, however - and this applies to other part (c) answers - lacked perception.

Section 4

N.B. Comments on this section are limited because of the small number of candidates involved.

Question 15

This was a popular question and well answered in all its parts.

Question 16

Some struggled with part (b) and had difficulty finding appropriate reasons in part (c). Perhaps these need to be brought out in class discussion.

Question 17

The few who attempted this question answered it fairly well.

Question 18

Not attempted.

Question 19

Well answered.

Question 20

This question was handled confidently with no discernible problems.

General Points

The Syllabus

Many parts of the syllabus - demonstrably Section One - were very well known and candidates naturally chose questions where they felt particularly strong in their knowledge. Teachers and students should be aware, however, that as certain topics become 'well worn' questions are likely to be set on parts of the syllabus which to date have been relatively neglected. In preparing for the examination, therefore, it is as well to attempt to cover all parts of the syllabus, especially those that have not been tested in the past two or three years.

Thus recently questions concerning the ancestry and early years of the Prophet have turned up under Section Two; this year the other end of his life - his 'rule and death' as the syllabus puts it - appeared in question 8. The question itself was quite straightforward, yet it was clear that many candidates were unsure of the facts - the Battle of Hunain, the treaties with new converts and the Greater Pilgrimage, followed by the Prophet's final days. Up to five out of six marks were available without reference to any battles; despite this, many (wrongly) resorted to descriptions of the conquest of Makkah. It followed that answers to part (b), which asked for comment on "this period", were bound to be wrong too. Remarkably, the quotation in part (c) foxed many as well, whereas with a little thought it becomes clear that the Prophet's legacy lay in his personal example (honesty, justice, faith, courage, etc.) and in laying the foundations of a great empire. Thus there were plenty of marks available on this question, and in its way, assuming the basic facts were known, it was easier to handle than the much more popular question 6.

The point of these observations is to encourage candidates to study ALL parts of the syllabus, especially those parts which may seem slightly obscure.

Perception

The 'part (c)' or evaluative part of a question usually carries one third of the marks. It has been mentioned before that this part requires a little thought by the candidate. It is not necessary to write large amounts - sometimes the comment can

be quite succinct - but it is necessary to try to write something which is not only sensible but also **perceptive**. The response should show that the candidate has given some thought to the issue under discussion; not just accuracy is required (although this obviously matters) but also **perception**.

For example, 'Why is it important for Muslims today to remember past events?' Apart from the importance of tradition, the perceptive comment is that it **increases the sense of unity** among Muslims. 'Why is the idea of **universal** brotherhood important to Muslims?' The perceptive comment is that all people are children of Adam and therefore Muslims ought to care for the welfare of **all** (and so claim the moral high ground). 'Why may zakah be described as "a test of sincerity"?' The perceptive comment is that it shows that the giver is prepared to use his/her money for the service of humanity.

A little time given to thought of this kind, even in the pressure of the examination, will improve what may already be above-average scripts. Class discussion of such issues would be a good way to develop and refine such skills.

ISLAMIYAT 7568, GRADE BOUNDARIES

Grade	A	B	C	D	E
Lowest mark for award of grade	68	60	52	47	38

Note: Grade boundaries may vary from year to year and from subject to subject, depending on the demands of the question paper.
