

Examiners' Report January 2008

GCE O Level

GCE O Level Islamiyat (7568)

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O Level Islamiyat Report

Introduction

This year the size of the entry continued to decrease - 205 candidates compared to 237 in 2007.

There were no Specification changes: the structure and the demands of the Question Paper remained similar to previous years.

The ability of the entry was broadly similar to previous years. A number of able candidates produced high-quality answers.

Many candidates were well-prepared. Less able candidates found the discussion questions in part (c) very challenging and some misunderstood altogether the meaning of some quotations. All candidates produced good responses to Section One and performed reasonably well in answering Section Three. Section Two, was handled less well especially Questions 4 and 7 which were very popular.

Section One: The Qur'an and Hadith

This section was tackled competently, with no serious errors.

In Question 1(a)(iii), some candidates didn't recognise the key phrase "Allah sees and hears everything" as the distinguishing mark of Allah's justice but simply said that Allah was bound to be more just than human beings without explaining why.

Very few answers to Question 1(b)(iii) were accurate ie the Prophet's insulters were killed in battle.

In Question 1(c)(i), the idea of dependence was important, less able candidates simply said that God was Lord and men were His slaves.

Questions 2 and 3 were generally well answered, the ahadis rather better than the ayats. The idea of feuds, quarrels and divisions was needed in Question 2(a)(i) and something more than just forgiveness of sins, such as "innocence", "purity", "new-born baby" etc., was required in response to Question 2(b)(ii). Better candidates extended the idea of forgiveness in these ways. Apart from those who (correctly) referred to Shirk, few identified why Muslims are opposed to superstitions in Question 2(c)(ii). More able candidates wrote about adulteration in Question 2(d)(i) ie the mixing of good and bad crops. The key idea of Question 2(e)(i) was that the Ansar gave the Muhajirun shelter. Answers to Question 3 provoked little criticism, but most candidates struggled to produce examples of kindness or helpfulness in Question 3(d)(ii).

Section Two: The Life, Teaching and Achievements of the Prophet

Question 4 was a popular question but was not answered well by the majority of candidates. In part (a)(i), only the most able candidates explained how Khadijah encouraged the Prophet to believe. In part (a)(ii) only a few candidates noted that Waraqah's message was given twice, i.e., to Khadijah and the Prophet. Nearly all candidates answered part (b) well. Some responses to part (c) did not answer the question, commenting on the warnings rather than the rulers, and those who correctly commented on the rulers then made conditional responses - if he was corrupt he should be warned, etc., whereas examples of actual corruption in modern society were required.

In Question 5 the majority of candidates answered part (a) well and scored full marks. In part (b) less able candidates didn't concentrate on the person of the Prophet but wrote about tribal conflict instead. Only the most able candidates correctly explained how the Prophet tried to mollify the Jews, however no candidates mentioned the point that the Prophet linked Friday worship to Jewish preparation for the Sabbath. There were some reasonable essays in response to part (c) but few candidates commented on the examples of poor behaviour among non-Muslims and then only briefly.

Question 6 was not a popular question but one which was often answered very well. Useful detail in response to parts (b) and (c) was produced by more able candidates.

In Question 7 battle accounts were reasonably well-known although some candidates included Jewish plots against the Prophet and how he responded; these plots were a side-issue and not part of the battle itself. Responses to part (b) were fairly general, with more able candidates scoring quite well, but no candidates explained how the ditch-digging showed that the Prophet was one with his people. In part (c) all sorts of rules were produced, however not all of these were Jihad rules. Good examples included, Fighting for a just cause - in the name of Allah; Striking a non-aggressive posture; Avoiding non-indiscriminate killing - the innocent, the protection of plants, etc.

In Question 8 part (a), some candidates wrongly chose to include details of the Hudaibiyah Treaty which did not answer the question. A few good candidates identified the "before conquest" points the majority of candidates described the purification of the Ka'bah and the issue of a general pardon. In contrast, no candidates explained how the Prophet used the wealth of the Quraysh to pay his soldiers. This and other points mattered in part (b) where the comments on statesmanship and religious leadership related to the actions in (a). From the comments, it was clear that many candidates didn't understand what the term "statesman" meant and so missed the general idea that the Prophet had the ability to recognize the lasting effects of his actions. Answers concerning religious leadership were usually accurate, but no one mentioned that his actions showed that material possessions meant little to him. In part (c), most candidates wrote about the conquest of Makkah. However other candidates wrote about the spread of Islam which is a very wide topic, two alternative topics appear in the Mark Scheme - his teaching about social justice, still important today, and the example he set as a husband and father.

Section Three (for Sunni students)

In Question 9, “kindness” figured prominently in part (a)(ii), it was not expected to see it used to explain the Hadith in part (a)(i). The suggestion in the Mark Scheme that all things come from Allah and therefore He is the source of gratitude, coupled with the opposite view that ingratitude shows a lack of belief in Allah, was not what candidates wrote about. In answer to part (a)(iii), some candidates wrote about physical disease whereas moral/spiritual disease was expected. Responses to part (b) were varied most of which earned some marks. In part (c) candidates did not respond to the word “essential” in the Question.

Question 10 was not attempted by many candidates and was generally answered poorly. Part (a) stipulated the teaching in the Qur’an and the most able candidates got some or all of the teachings listed in the Mark Scheme. Reference to “the Mehr” or “dowry” was also allowed. In part (b) about “arranged marriages” candidates identified the importance of the family’s choice but wrote little about that of compatibility; in addition, they identified “mixed marriages” with “love marriages” and did not write about difficulties likely to attend inter-faith marriages. Answers part (c) were not strong and some candidates gave points such as family security, the preservation of the faith through children and the importance of the family unit in part (a).

Some candidates coped well with Question 11. Obedience to the commands of Allah was rightly referred to in part (b) but in part (c) some candidates didn’t write about the connection between “going without food” and “fasting”. Those that did were easily able to score six marks.

In Question 12 there were some high-scoring answers. In part (b), “meaning” and “importance” of the two ceremonies outlined in part (a) were required. There were 8 marks available for this question and each ceremony was worth 2+2 marks. The structure of answers should have fitted this valuation, this was not always the case.

In Question 13, most candidates gave accurate accounts of the relative contributions of Abu Bakr and Uthman to the expansion of Islam with reference to the Qur’an. Answers to part (b) in some cases were very vague. The reference to “religious leaders” in part (c) was not picked out by many candidates.

Question 14 was a popular question, which on the whole was answered well. No candidates had any trouble identifying the groups, in addition, at least one “connection” mark was scored. Generosity, courage and unity were not clearly defined in part (b) as they are in the Mark Scheme, but some of this material appeared in other forms and earned some credit. In part (c) there were as many questioning the value of conscience as favoured it. Pre-prepared answers were very much in evidence here, where they were relevant, they earned credit. No candidates referred to conscience as “the stirrings of God’s will”, perhaps another discussion point worth considering for future use.

Section Four (for Shi’ah students)

Only a small number of candidates attempted questions from this section.

General Comments

On several occasions candidates did not answer the question set. For instance, Question 3(e)(ii) asked for **one** example to show how the Hadith may help to understand the Qur'an. Some candidates just didn't give an example and so could not score a mark.

Question 5(b) requested **three** reasons why the Jews objected to the leadership of the Prophet. Both the number and the topic - the leadership of the Prophet - were not answered, so that the fitness of the Prophet to lead the Jews - references to his teaching (the Qur'an) and Jewish ideas about the Messiah - were not seen.

Question 7(c) specifically asked for Jihad rules observed in the battle of the Fosse.

Much irrelevant material appeared in Question 8(a), which specified that accounts should **begin** from the breaking of the Hdaybiyyah treaty. Many candidates wrote much about the Prophet's actions **before** the conquest of Makkah, even though these actions were useful illustrations of his statesmanship (required in part (b)).

Question 10(a) asked for the teaching of the Qur'an about marriage. Many did not refer to the Qur'an.

On many occasions candidates lost marks by not thinking over what the question was asking. Thus in Question 8(b) many identified the word "statesman" with "commander" or simply "leader". A statesman is someone who acts in such a way that he has a long-term view in mind. Thus in the conquest of Makkah the Prophet forsook open aggression, believing that in that way he would avoid unnecessary bloodshed and the harbouring of resentment; he treated his enemies far better than they deserved and thus won their admiration and commitment to his cause; and generally he showed the vision to recognize the lasting effects of his actions. In the third part of this question, the "open choice" meant that too few gave sufficient thought to produce some original ideas. For instance, it goes without saying that many of the Prophet's social teachings are still relevant to Muslim society today - a great achievement, one worthy of eliciting most, if not all, of the marks on offer.

In Question 9(c) many accurately explained how the Hadith support the Qur'an but are they **essential** to its understanding? This key word needed thinking over carefully.

The meaning of "mixed marriages" in Question 10(b) was too easily assumed to refer to "love marriages", what the phrase actually means, and why they are unpopular, required thought.

Statistics

Overall Subject Grade Boundaries

Grade	Max. Mark	A	B	C	D	E
Overall subject grade boundaries	100	65	57	49	44	37

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

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