

# Examiners' Report Summer 2008

GCE O Level

## GCE O Level Islamiyat (7568)

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## O Level Islamiyat (7568)

### Introduction

**Entry:** Last summer's entry figure was maintained, albeit with a small increase, demonstrating again that the core support for this examination is solid. Centres which traditionally have supplied quality candidates continue to do so, helping to maintain high standards, both in the challenge offered by the question paper and in many of the responses to it. Unfortunately, this session did not witness any substantial numbers attempting Section Four of the Question Paper; it is hoped that this will not become a permanent feature but that the recent welcome appearance of Shi'ah candidates will shortly be revived.

**The Examination:** The specification and structure of the Question Paper followed the pattern of previous years. There were no hidden traps or pitfalls for the unwary to negotiate; all students were able to demonstrate their ability and to justify their preparations for the examination to the full.

**Performance:** It is pleasing to report that a large majority of candidates did themselves justice. Section One was again answered competently and often was an important determining factor in arriving at the total mark for the paper. As for the other sections, those who answered Questions 4 and 5 or 5 and 7 in Section Two and 11 and 14 in Section Three often did very well. Weaker candidates who chose Questions 6, 8, 9 and 12 did themselves no favours.

**Grades:** There were some exceptionally high marks scored by the best candidates and a substantial number producing creditable performances at the next level. This suggested that the placing of the A/B and C/D boundaries should reflect that trend.

### Section One

#### Q1(a)

Apart from good translations, this was the least well done. (a)(i), with its emphasis on "show", implied the presence of others, but this point was generally ignored. A minority recognized the importance of putting prayers into practice; others left it at "being sure to concentrate". The "small kindness" of (a)(ii) was written by many in generally vague terms, but some did it well, e.g., helping a blind person cross the road, helping someone pick up books they had dropped, etc. "Smiling" was not sufficient!

#### Q1(b)

Very popular and usually well done throughout apart from some just having Khadijah consoling or comforting: how she did so was needed.

### Q1(c)

The translations were good and answers to (i) were fine, with murder, rape the most usual, plus a few wild animals. A few weaker candidates put "witchcraft" as the answer for both (i) and (ii). For (ii), however, about 60% got some idea of harm/cursing rather than just a description. For (iii), a good many wrote that "Allah doesn't like it", which can apply to so many things. More sensibly, others wrote that we should be grateful to Allah for what we have.

### Q2(a)

Part (i) was often limited to treating his wives and children equally. Any reasonable suggestion was accepted in (ii).

### Q2(b)

(i) The implication of the word "sinful" in terms of Allah was not understood.

### Q2(c)

(i) Surprisingly few got the idea of "worldwide", many leaving it as "community".

### Q2(d)

In (i) most correctly had the idea of a minor pilgrimage but the word "first" was frequently omitted in defining the House of Allah in (ii).

### Q2(e)

On the whole this was well-answered throughout, but in (ii) a few said that the Prophet respected Halimah as his mother and some just wrote "he respected her". A minority correctly identified the saying "Paradise lies under the feet of a mother" and another referred to the conversation about saving your mother before your father.

### Q3(b)

(ii) Some had the Prophet building the mosque or trading in Makkah without mentioning commitment. "He always worked hard" or "he fought well in battles" was insufficient.

### Q3(c)

Answers to (i) were often left at "honesty is important in Islam" with few references to Allah. (ii) was usually accurately answered but a few misread the question as "why" rather than "when".

### Q3(d)

(ii): Not all mentioned the essential ingredient of practising the code.

## Section Two

### Q4

This was a popular question but answers tended to be very limited on Abd-al Muttalib (few mentioned monotheism) and fairly limited on Halimah (few mentioned the miracles). Referring back to Halimah in part (b), some said the Prophet learnt how to meditate and others that tending sheep taught him to guide his people (a possibility, but he was only five - or less - at the time). "Learning Arabic" has nothing to do with character. There were some very good answers for (c), although the words "Why important..." were ignored by some.

### Q5

Another popular question, although many don't get the resurrection with the teaching about the Day of Judgement. Candidates knew well why his opponents refused to accept the Prophet's teaching. A significant number, however, took the wrong teaching and used looking after the poor, etc. This was another reminder to observe the wording of the question. Examples were needed in (c): not many were forthcoming.

### Q6

Some chose this question - with mixed success. For a start, the Prophet's Madinah teaching was needed, not his Final Sermon! In part (a), many were very general on slaves, not really knowing the teaching. They were better on the poor (but with some cross-crediting) and most wrote reasonably well about the widows. In part (b) only a few used Zaid and fewer still Bilal: most just said that the Prophet fed and clothed the slaves. On the other hand, they all knew that he married widows. In part (c) some thought that there are still ill-treated slaves, that nobody wants to pay Zakat and that the plight of widows is ignored; fortunately, the majority managed to be a bit more positive than that. The best answers to part (c) sensibly took the teachings in (a) in turn, i.e., (i), (ii) and (iii).

### Q7

This was another popular question and most answered part (a) very well. Many, however, were surprisingly vague about the Prophet's character and faith, confining their comments to good leadership and having the faith to fight when their numbers were few. In part (c) most made relevant comments, e.g., that greed for worldly goods leads nowhere. A few said that the events encouraged one to fight Islam's enemies today.

### Q8

Very few answered this question. Those that did stopped at the breaking of the treaty, after writing long, detailed accounts about the events leading to its breaking. Details of the actual conquest of Makkah were missing, although it was sometimes possible to award some cross-credit, if they commented in (b) on the Prophet's merciful treatment of his former enemies. Other comments in (b) tended to be confined to the Prophet not being one to break promises and being prepared to sign the treaty, so some marks were achieved and some cross-credit. Nearly all managed to score two marks at the beginning of part (c) and one or two on truthfulness.

## Section Three

### Q9

The few really good responses showed how this question should be answered. Some in the middle knew the creation of man from a blood-clot and all creation; weaker candidates just said that Allah created everything. Similarly some really knew God as Judge but others wrote only that Allah is always watching us to judge us. Surely all know about the Day of Judgement! In part (b) most managed worshipping Allah as Creator and the need for good behaviour, as Allah will reward us for it. There were some interesting discussions in part (c), especially from good candidates: most had life being pointless without a belief in God. Some scored full marks.

### Q10

This was not a popular question but those who answered it managed quite well. Clearly they know the story of Abraham and its application. Most, however, did not write about the Prophet (Muhammad, p.b.u.h.) in part (b), writing about "prophets" in general instead, even though there is reference to "the Prophet" throughout the examination paper. Six marks were unnecessarily forfeited. Was this simply an example of misunderstanding a question or was there a psychological reason for the error? Part (c) was reasonably well-answered, albeit often with the comment that followers changed the teaching of all the other prophets, so the last Prophet had to be sent.

### Q11

This was a popular question and often very well done throughout, with heavy scoring. A few candidates were unsure about Mandub and in (b) some voiced the opinion that the death penalty protects one's health. On the whole, however, there were no problems with this question.

### Q12

This question was surprisingly badly answered, especially in part (a). Some wrote at length on the various proportions of everything which has to be given, without mentioning the recipients. Others managed 2.5% and giving to the poor but not much else. Answers to part (b) were better: most knew at least some of the benefits quite well. Responses to part (c) produced mixed points of view but some good compromise answers and many expressing the opinion that "you can't take it with you to the life hereafter".

### Q13

Only a minority attempted this question, yet it produced some very good answers, especially in part (a). Accounts of Abu Bakr's reign were supplemented by reference to conquests but this shouldn't have been necessary; similarly, comments in part (b) depended on whether there had been reference to more than just conquests in (a). Some excellent answers recognized the importance of this period to the very survival of Islam. Answers to part (c) were similarly mixed with a few getting all the relevant points.



#### Q14

A very popular question with few achieving less than half marks. Some quoted from the Qur'an rather than answering in their own words about husbands and wives: thus there was rarely reference under wives to the creation of a secure home and the organization of the family. There was stress on treating children equally, loving them and giving them a good education, but with no mention of providing for their needs and transmitting the faith. Many did better and answered correctly throughout part (a). In part (b) there were some very good answers but a number wrote only about Fatimah for the children and limiting wives to sharing time equally and respecting them. Most disagreed with the statement in part (c), writing well on the value of family life; others agreed, writing about the pressures of modern life making family life less important, friends being more of an influence than family. The best candidates fully comprehended the impact of the statement, i.e., that family life doesn't matter as much as it used to do, thus a discussion about value rather than simply fact.

## Section Four

Again only one or two candidates attempted this section, probably not Shi'ah students.

### General Points

Choice of Questions: There were good reasons why some questions were more popular than others. Those who answered Questions 4, 5 or 7 in Section Two and 11 and 14 in Section Three often did very well. These questions were no less demanding than others on the paper but covered familiar ground. This is not to say that there were not good answers to Questions 6, 8, 9 and 12, but the best candidates recognized that in some respects if they chose to answer these questions they would perhaps be treading on thinner ice. On the other hand, weaker candidates often chose these questions and fell into traps of their own making, for example, writing about the wrong teaching in Question 6 or the details of events leading to the Treaty of Hudaibiyyah in Question 8 (not required). Teaching again appeared in Question 9, and Question 12 (a), although factual, still required knowledge of doctrine as much as practical examples. Here, then, is a general teaching point, which may have been made before but which is worth reiterating: an initial careful reading of the Question Paper and a few minutes spent considering which questions to answer could, indeed often does, pay rich dividends. The three-part nature of the essay questions in Sections Two, Three and Four should also remind candidates to take a look at all the parts in making this choice.

Careful Reading: In line with the previous paragraph is the matter of reading the questions carefully both to ensure that the question has been understood properly and that its requirements are met. For example, the first question on this paper used the words "may show...", which (in this case) implies the presence of others. The words "Why is it important..." in Question 4 (c) were key to a successful answer but on many papers were ignored; examples were required in 5(c) but were often overlooked or undeveloped; in Question 7 phrases such as "at this time" and "these events" were important; "examples" again in Question 9 and, perhaps the most glaring of all, "the Prophet" (not "prophets") in Question 10. Failure to read such words and phrases carefully enough led to a less successful performance from some candidates than might well have been the case.

## Statistics

### Overall Subject Grade Boundaries

Grade	Max. Mark	A	B	C	D	E
Overall subject grade boundaries	100	67	59	51	46	39

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