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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

General comments on 2058/01 and 2058/02

Most candidates coped very well with these Papers, considering that this was the first time they have been set in this form. Candidates appeared to have been prepared to answer most questions, and in their answers were able to give a wide range of relevant factual information and often some insightful evaluation.

However, a number of problems familiar from previous examinations persisted. One was the clear failure on the part of many candidates to read a question properly and take time to work out what precisely it is asking. Another was to give information that was not being asked for. There was also a tendency to repeat details given in answer to one part of a question in another, or to supply these details in the wrong part of the answer.

It is understandable that candidates should want to get on with writing their answers as quickly as possible in the examination, especially if they see a question that appears at first reading to cover a topic they know well. However, all candidates would be well advised to spend some time firstly in reading the whole Paper carefully in order to gain a general idea of what the questions are covering. When they have chosen the questions they expect to answer they should spend a few minutes noting down what they should include in each answer, making sure that this does not go beyond limits set in the question, and checking whether it meets the precise requirements of the question. There is no reason why they could not include rough notes of this kind in their examination booklet, maybe on the first or last page, crossed out when they finish with them so that the Examiners know not to read them. This practice will go a long way in helping candidates to avoid making the familiar mistakes noted above.

Teachers will know that questions in this examination look for both the ability to present information concisely and accurately, and also for the ability to evaluate the importance of this information. If candidates are to gain high marks, they cannot avoid thinking about and reflecting upon the importance of the topics included for study, and being able to explain their significance in Islam. This is in addition to knowing about the topics factually. Candidates will be very unlikely indeed to gain an A grade without being able to demonstrate this awareness and so Examiners hope that Teachers will give time to helping their candidates to develop the skills required to approach the topics they cover in this reflective way.

There are two final comments on general matters. The first concerns the number of questions on each Paper required to be answered. Some candidates answered four questions in Paper 1, while others answered only three in Paper 2. The syllabus and the Question Papers make it clear that in 2058/01 candidates should answer *three* questions out of four, and in 2058/02 they should answer *four* questions out of five, making seven answers in all. The second concerns handwriting. In a few scripts this year, Examiners had considerable difficulty in actually reading what a candidate had written because of very poor handwriting. Teachers are asked to inform candidates that scripts that are excessively difficult to read could result in fewer marks being awarded.

Paper 2058/01

Paper 1

General comments

In this Paper there were four questions, of which candidates had to attempt **Question 1**, **Question 2** and one other. **Questions 1** and **2** were generally answered well, though in **Question 2 (a)** it is surprising how many pertinent details about the difficulties encountered by the Prophet while at Mecca were omitted. Candidates who attempted **Question 3** also generally answered it well, though there was often a lot in **Question 3 (a)** about the Prophet Muhammad, when this part asked specifically about the prophets "before the time of Muhammad". **Question 4** was generally not well answered, and most candidates appeared not to know in **(a)** who "the major collectors" of Hadith were or the methods they employed, or in **(c)** that *Qiyas* is traditionally regarded as the fourth, not third, basis of legal thinking. There were very few attempts at the specifically Shi'i question in **(d)**.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

Here candidates were asked to comment on any two of the three Qur'an passages included. The passages were given in Arabic and English, though it should be remembered that the English can never be an adequate translation of the Arabic (the translations here are from Yusuf 'Ali and slightly modernised). Candidates should never rely on the English alone but should know thoroughly what the Arabic means.

The instruction at the start of the question asked candidates to comment on "the main teachings" contained in the passages. This means two things: firstly, they are not asked to comment on the background of the passage or its context, unless this is directly relevant to its meaning; secondly, they are asked to identify the main teachings of Islam referred to in the passage, and not to summarise it or paraphrase it. Thus, for example, a good answer to (a) would gain the maximum 4 marks allowed for this passage by identifying the main teachings concerning such items as: the call of a prophet – the unexpectedness and surprise, the purpose of the call, and the miracles often associated with it; the power of God – shown here in the bush not burning up, the staff turning into a snake; and the relationship between God and his chosen messenger – confirmed in God's promise to Moses that he is "secure".

In answers to (a), many candidates went into long accounts about the life of Moses in Egypt from his birth onwards, which was specifically not asked for. In answers to (b) many tended to paraphrase the Chapter rather than pointing out its main teachings, and some omitted to say that it is about the first revelation of the Qur'an. Again in (c) many simply outlined the contents of the Chapter, rather than explaining its main teachings about judgement and the rewards for good and bad conduct.

Question 2

In part (a) candidates were expected to give a concise but accurate account of the main difficulties experienced by the young Muslim community in the years between the first revelation to the Prophet Muhammad and the *hijra*. An immediate challenge was to decide when to start and when to finish the account. Good answers would not have started with the first revelation itself, but with the Prophet's first public preaching and the rejection he encountered. Answers should have concluded at the point of the *hijra*, but should not have described it, since the Prophet left Mecca at this time. They would have included, e.g., the sufferings of Muhammad's followers, especially Bilal and others known to have been tortured; the insults and physical assaults on the Prophet himself; the flight to Abyssinia; the boycott imposed on the Prophet's family; the deaths of the Prophet's wife and uncle. Examiners looked for sharp accounts of these sufferings, and there were many very full answers, leading to high scores in this part. However, some candidates omitted a number of these events, others brought in events from the Prophet's youth or the *hijra*, and one or two wrote about the battles waged between the Prophet's forces and the Meccans in the years following 622.

Part (b) was answered very well by some candidates, and a few were able to draw moral comparisons between the events of the Prophet's time and events taking place in the Arab world at the time of the examination itself. This is exactly what the Examiners wish to encourage, since it shows a lively ability to see in the crucial happenings of the Prophet's life lessons for Muslims today. Others wrote more generally about the examples of patience and acceptance set by the first Muslims, though some continued to give facts about the period referred to in the question without addressing the question asked in (b) itself.

Question 3

Most candidates who attempted this question appeared to grasp what was being asked in part (a), and gave full accounts of the main shared characteristics of the line of prophets, including their human status, their sinlessness, their being chosen by God rather than themselves, their being sent to one community, and so on. Better answers named a number of them, and also the books named in the Qur'an as revealed to some of them. The best answers referred to the need for new revelations following the corruption suffered by earlier revelations.

Some candidates, however, wrote at length about the supremacy of the Prophet Muhammad, even though the question specifically asked for discussion of prophets "before the time of Muhammad". Their failure to observe the limits set is one of the examples referred to above of not reading the Question Paper properly.

Many answers to (b) lacked the clarity of answers to (a), as though candidates were unable to explain exactly what this part of the *Shahada* means. The best answers mentioned the universality and finality of the Prophet's message and his relation to previous prophets as being to confirm, complete and consolidate his work. They also referred to his character as an example for Muslims to follow.

Answers that simply said it is important to believe in Muhammad, or Muhammad was the Seal of the Prophets, without any further explanation, showed this lack of clarity and were not given marks.

Question 4

There were few adequate answers to (a). Good answers would have named at least al-Bukhari and Muslim, and explained how they examined both the *matn*, text, of the Hadith, and the *isnad*, chain of transmitters. The best answers would have given details and examples of how they went about this task.

Many candidates did appear able to identify these collectors, though they seemed to think their work was done in the first two generations after the Prophet. Some confused their work with the collection of the Qur'an in the first years after the Prophet's death.

Answers to (b) were on the whole better, and many candidates were able to rank the Qur'an as the supreme source of law which is followed unquestioningly, with the Hadith supplementing it where it is undetailed or silent. The best answers gave examples of how this happens in specific cases.

Candidates who attempted (c) appeared more concerned to say what *Qiyas* is, than to explain the circumstances in which it is used. Only 1 mark was allowed for identifications of *Qiyas*, while three were allowed for full explanations of how experts make use of it when the Qur'an, Hadith and consensus are silent. Some candidates appeared to think it is the third of the classical principles of legal thinking, not the fourth.

Very few candidates attempted (d), which was intended to allow Shi'is to discuss a particular element of their legal tradition. (Of course, wherever other questions in the Paper could be answered from a particularly Shi'i perspective, credit was given.) Good answers would have referred to the encouragement given in the Qur'an to use one's reason and the example shown by the Imams in giving rational teachings, and then gone on to explain how the use of reason helps Muslims apply traditional teachings in new circumstances.

Some candidates answered both part (c) and part (d) despite clear instructions at the start of the question.

Paper 2058/02

Paper 2

General comments

See also the earlier general comments for both Paper 2058/01 and Paper 2058/02.

This Paper contained five questions, of which candidates had to attempt **Question 1**, **Question 2** and **Question 3**, and one other. Answers to **Question 1** were generally good, though there was a lot of repetition, and answers to **Question 2** were also mostly good. **Question 3** was answered least satisfactorily, mainly because candidates did not read it properly and failed to give the required examples from the Qur'an and the Prophet's life. Most candidates who attempted **Question 4** gave good answers, though those who attempted **Question 5** seemed to lack detailed knowledge about the hostility between 'Ali and Mu'awiya.

Again, there were very few distinctively Shi'i answers in this Paper, although **Question 4 (a)(iv)** and **Question 5** gave particular scope for this.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

In this question candidates are asked to choose any seven of the ten underlined words or phrases, comment on their meaning and importance. They are not asked to comment on the passage as a whole (as is asked for in Paper 2058/01, **Question 1**), and do not need to discuss its background or context. When commenting on the meaning of a word or phrase candidates should consider the passage in which it occurs and explain how it may be understood in that context. Its importance will be determined both by the passage and by the wider context of Islamic teachings. Thus, for example, the meaning of phrase (1) is that there is only one God and no other being can be placed together with him or compared with him. Its significance is that this is the declaration of *tawhid*, the fundamental teaching of Islam which is part of the *Shahada*.

This question was generally well answered, though few candidates appeared able to show precise knowledge of the original Arabic passages. Thus, for example, in (5) they were unable to give a satisfactory explanation of the term *samad*, and in (6) many thought that *wa-lam yulad* means that God does not give birth, the exact opposite of its meaning. In this phrase, some candidates who were clearly relying on the translation only, did not understand the word 'begotten' and misread it for 'forgotten'.

A small final point: Teachers are asked to advise candidates that when they answer this question they should indicate which part they are attempting simply by giving the bracketed number relating to it. This alone is sufficient identification.

Question 2

Here candidates were asked to comment on the teachings in any seven of the ten set Hadith on Muslim belief and action, "about what Muslims should believe and how they should act". Good answers would have attempted to identify these two aspects of each Hadith, for two full marks.

Most candidates were able to write something about the teaching in each Hadith concerning belief, but fewer were able to identify what it says about conduct or behaviour. This underlines the need for Teachers to help their candidates to approach the Hadith listed in the syllabus from this angle of trying to understand firstly what they teach about the belief of Muslims, and secondly what they teach about how Muslims should behave.

Here, as in **Question 1**, it is important for the candidate to show knowledge of the Arabic original, since any English translation can only be an approximation. It is also important to write enough to gain two marks. It is difficult to be precise about the required length, but it seems safe to say that whereas a whole side of a page is probably too much, one or two sentences is too little. Candidates who generally did well in this question normally wrote just over half a side for each answer.

Question 3

This was the least satisfactorily answered question in either Paper, chiefly because very few candidates answered it as it was set. The instruction at the start makes it quite clear that answers should refer to the teachings of the Qur'an and the life of the Prophet. In the 8 marks allocated to each part, most were allowed for actual examples from these two sources and discussions about them.

Good answers will thus have given one or two general remarks about relationships, for example with friends, as these are taught in Islam, and would then have immediately referred to what the Qur'an teaches on the subject and what the Prophet's life shows about it. The best answers would have quoted relevant verses from the Qur'an, or referred to them, and either quoted Hadith or briefly told about an incident from the *Sira*, and then commented briefly on the significance of this point for friendship.

It is maybe worth saying here that when teachings from the Qur'an are made use of in an answer, it is not necessary for the candidate to quote a verse word-perfect or to give its reference. In examination conditions, this is too much to ask. It is enough to be able to outline what the verse teaches, though the closer the reference the better.

The majority of answers to this question tended to give strings of generalised comments about treatment of friends, strangers and business partners, e.g. that one should be sincere towards them, treat them with kindness, or be honest towards them. There is nothing distinctively Islamic here, let alone from the Qur'an or *Sira*. Few candidates thought about the Hadith set in the syllabus and what they teach about these relationships, and in answers to (c) almost no-one commented on avoidance of usury in business partnerships. In general, the great majority of answers showed little imagination, or even readiness to use what information candidates must have picked up from studying the syllabus.

Question 4

Part (a) was generally popular and well answered, though a surprising number of answers omitted key points, such as Bilal giving the first call to prayer, Talha being one of the Ten Blessed Companions, and Hafsa keeping the Qur'an. Some answers stated that Talha was killed at the Battle of Siffin. Good answers gave four full and clear descriptive points about the three chosen figures, linked into a brief biography.

The more searching part (b) was clearly a difficult challenge to most candidates. Many were able to explain how Bilal's example of steadfast faith when he suffered persecution has inspired Muslims since, and some explained the importance of Hafsa's role in preserving the copy of the Qur'an made under Abu Bakr, but the importance of the other two figures presented problems. It was particularly noticeable that no candidate mentioned the importance of Hasan in Shi'i beliefs.

Part (b) is one of those elements in the examination in which the very best candidates can show their qualities. Successful answers to this part would help candidates towards an A grade, so preparation to answer this kind of question should be given greater importance than at present.

Question 5

Surprisingly, this question was generally not answered accurately and many candidates did not appear to have a thorough grasp of the facts relating to `Ali's dealings with Mu'awiya. Again, there was scope here for answers to give Shi'i interpretations of the events, though hardly any candidates took the opportunity to do so.

In (a) most attempts referred to `Ali's decision to remove Mu'awiya from his position, though few went on to make the point about Mu'awiya's dispute over `Ali's treatment of the murderers of `Uthman. Good answers would have mentioned the events following the third Caliph's death, and especially Mu'awiya's insistence that `Ali should punish his uncle's murderers. The best answers would have briefly mentioned `Ali's difficulties over taking any action, and Mu'awiya's continuing refusal to recognise him until he acted.

Part (b) required accurate descriptions of the main events of the Battle of Siffin, including the meetings of the two forces, the indecisiveness of the engagement, the ploy of Mu'awiya's troops to tie Qur'ans to their lances, and the decision about arbitration. There were some complete answers to this part, of which the best hinted at the unease felt among some of `Ali's side about this outcome.

Part (c) was the least well answered, mainly because most candidates did not know about the events it refers to. Some were able to identify the supporters who abandoned `Ali as Kharijites/Khawarij, but almost no-one knew much about their refusal to accept his agreement to arbitrate and their condemnation of him. In most candidates' minds they were simply rebels.