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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 2058/01 and 2058/02

The overall standard of performance in this examination was probably slightly higher than last year. Most candidates appeared to have covered the whole syllabus, and were able to give answers to the factual questions comprehensively and knowledgeably. This shows that the majority of teachers provide for their candidates ample materials that embrace the entire scope of what is required for this examination. For searching out suitable sources and for covering a wide syllabus, teachers are to be congratulated.

As teachers will know, the examination tests both factual knowledge of the beliefs and early history of Islam and ability to understand and assess the significance of this knowledge. Emphasis has been laid on both these two elements for many years, reflected in examination questions divided into descriptive and evaluative parts. Candidates can only expect to obtain high marks if they develop both the ability to recall the important factual parts of the syllabus and also the skill to demonstrate understanding of these facts. Teachers will know about this matter already from the syllabus, but it is important for them to remind themselves of it since they should attach prime significance to it as part of their work in preparing their candidates.

There were signs in this examination that many candidates had not been given enough practice in assessing and evaluating the significance of the facts they had learnt, and so they were caught unawares by questions that invited them to apply in new ways the factual knowledge they possessed and the significance of which they should know. An example came in Paper 2 **Question 3**, where candidates were asked to use their knowledge of the life of the Prophet in order to provide examples of how his conduct in four moral situations could be models for Muslims today. A good number of candidates were able to think of incidents that are well-known from the Prophet's biographies, and they were often able to extract appropriate morals from these. But a surprising number of candidates were clearly not at ease with the question. While some may not have read it carefully enough to grasp what it was asking, the majority did not appear able to understand the significance of major incidents they knew well from the biographical records of the Prophet, and were not able to use them as the question required.

Some teachers have recently expressed concern about the time allowed for the two papers. But the vast majority of candidates did not appear to be unduly perturbed by the time limits, and most gave no signs of having to hurry at the end of their answers. Candidates who failed to complete the paper had very often written long answers to early questions, leaving no time for the remainder and revealing the need for practice in management of time.

Teachers have also asked about the use of quotations and references from the Qur'an and Hadith in answers. The Examiners were pleased to note that many candidates either quoted verses and Hadiths or referred to them in answers, while some were actually able to give precise references in the form of chapter and verse numbers. This is excellent. But teachers should always bear in mind that since the purpose of such quotations and references is to support a point being made in an answer, the use of material from the Qur'an and Hadith must always be explained. There is no purpose in candidates simply giving lists of verses without saying why they are relevant to the discussion. It would be much better for them if they gave only one or two, and then showed how they connect with the point they are developing. It should be noted that the Examiners usually only allow 1 or 2 marks per question for such supporting references.

A last general point concerns a matter that has been mentioned often in past reports. A surprising number of candidates in this examination, as in the past, did not answer a question accurately because they had evidently not stopped to read it properly and consider exactly what it was asking. It is important to bear in mind that marks are not given for just any fact or comment about a topic that appears in a question, but only for those facts and comments that are relevant to what the question asks. Thus, for example, some answers to Paper 2 **Question 5 (a)** gave biographical accounts of the Ten Blessed Companions, whereas the question only asked candidates to identify them. No extra marks were given for these accounts.

Paper 2058/01

Paper 1

General comments

Many candidates were able to answer **Question 1** with ease, though **Question 2** caused problems because they did not appear to know who the 'hypocrites' were. **Question 3** was not as well answered as might be expected because many candidates failed to give accurate descriptions of fasting, while **Question 4**, which was a popular choice, produced some excellent answers.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

Here candidates were asked to identify and comment on the main teachings contained in two of the three Qur'an passages given. The Examiners were looking for answers that essentially did two things, firstly identify what main Qur'an teachings were referred to in the passage, and secondly explain how the passage expressed the teachings in a particular way. Thus, for example, in passage (a), they were looking for comments on the oneness, majesty and power of God, a major theme of the Qur'an, and also for the distinctive way in which this verse presents this theme by referring to God's power and knowledge in comparison with human power and knowledge, and how the throne of God represents this.

Some candidates identified one or more major teachings that were contained in the two passages they chose, and also went some way in explaining how the passage expressed the themes in its own language and imagery. But a shortcoming common to many answers was simply to paraphrase the passage without showing understanding of what it teaches; some candidates more or less reproduced the passage in its own words. Another shortcoming was to comment on the passages line by line; this was not identifying any main teachings.

A question that often arises in relation to this question is: How long should an answer be? It is impossible to be categorical about this, since candidates differ in their ability to express themselves. But it is worth bearing in mind that only 4 marks are allocated for each part, so that the Examiners are looking for a maximum of four relevant comments. Answers less than half a side long would probably not be enough to contain four comments, while answers longer than a side would probably contain a lot of irrelevant material.

Candidates should be reminded that the question does not ask about the context of a passage. Thus, those who discussed whether passage (c) is Meccan or Medinan in origin were not answering the question directly and were not credited for these remarks. The context should only be brought into an answer when it is immediately relevant to understanding its teachings.

This, in fact, was the case in passage (b), where many candidates identified it as relating to the Battle of Badr. The best answers to this showed how God as omnipotent was in control of the battle, and explained how and why his omnipotent control was shown in making the two forces smaller than they were.

Question 2

This question is nearly always concerned with the life and significance of the Prophet. In this paper it asked about the period of his life in Medina, and Examiners were looking for accurate accounts of his relations with the three major Jewish tribes and with the non-Muslim Arabs of the oasis. In part (a), they credited factual details about the developments that took place, including the names of the tribes and their changes in conduct that led to their exclusion, and also the main actions of the non-Muslim Arabs against the interests of the Muslims. In part (b), they credited precise reasons for the deterioration in relations between the Muslims and Jews from the time of the Covenant of Medina to the attack on the fortress of Khaybar, including their mocking of the Prophet and his followers, their siding with the Meccans and their breaking of the Covenant.

In answers to part (a), most candidates showed impressively detailed knowledge of the exploits of the Jews in Medina, though many thought that the Covenant of Medina was no more a treaty made specifically between the Prophet and the Jews in which he allowed them freedom. When teaching this aspect of the Prophet's life, teachers should make clear the true nature of this Covenant, which was intended to include all the tribes and clans in the oasis in an equal agreement with shared privileges and responsibilities, with the Jews named among them.

Many candidates said almost nothing about the 'hypocrites', those Medinan Arabs who appeared to side with the Muslims and withdrew their support at Uhud. This is strange, given that in past years the question on Uhud has appeared candidates have usually written a great deal about the force that came from the Prophet's army before the battle, giving its number and the names of its leaders.

In answers to part (b), many candidates were able to give four good reasons for the change in the Prophet's relations with the Jewish tribes, most importantly their siding with the Meccans and desertion of their Covenant obligations. However, there were, unfortunately, many critical and insulting remarks about the Jewish tribes of Medina. Few candidates appeared to be aware that one reason for the change in relations was that the Prophet gradually saw that his proclamation was not accepted by the Jews as agreeing with theirs. This is a religious rather than political reason.

Question 3

Part (a) asked for a straightforward and accurate description of how Muslims fast from the beginning of a day in Ramadan to sunset, and also the evening Qur'an recitation and the observances during the last ten days of the month.

It is surprising how many candidates wrote about how Muslims do not fast, mentioning the exceptions from fasting for pregnant mothers, the sick, etc., and the penalties for missing a fast, rather than what is involved in the act of fasting itself. The Mark Scheme allowed up to 2 marks for such comments, but no more.

The Examiners suggest that when they cover this item in future teachers should place the main emphasis upon the positive elements of the fast rather than these exceptions and negative elements.

Part (b) was more searching, in asking candidates for an explanation of the importance of Ramadan. Good answers would have included references to the teachings about it in the Qur'an and the Prophet's Hadith, its social aspects in alerting Muslims to the needs of the hungry, and its spiritual aspects in bringing a believer nearer to God.

Most candidates showed understanding of the basic importance of fasting for the individual and for society, but a number made points of description about fasting that should have been included in part (a). These points were not credited, because the question makes clear what is expected in each part.

Question 4

Part (a) proved a popular choice, and it was generally well answered, with some candidates obtaining full marks. The best answers began each of the three sections with general accounts of the characteristics of angels, books and prophets, and then giving examples of the best known of each, including their names. It was clear from many answers that most candidates had been fully prepared on the topic of the Articles of Belief.

(b) was more searching in that it required a clear explanation of the relationship between angels, books and prophets. The best answers would have mentioned the part played in the revelation from God of each of the three, and explained clearly how they were interlinked. Many candidates succeeded in doing this, and gained full marks.

In all this was generally a high-scoring question.

Paper 2058/02

Paper 2

General comments

In this paper **Question 3** proved particularly challenging, and few candidates answered it well. **Question 1** was not answered as accurately as it should be, though **Question 2** was generally well answered. **Questions 4** and **5** were generally well answered, though in **Question 4 (b)** many candidates found it difficult to suggest why their two chosen figures were significant in their relationships with the Prophet.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

In this question candidates are asked to comment on the meaning and importance of seven chosen words or phrases, rather than the whole passages from which they are taken. When commenting on the meanings of the words or phrases they should explain how these may be understood in the passages in which they occur, and when commenting on their importance they should think of the wider context of the teachings within the Qur'an as a whole. So, for example, when answering on phrase 3, 'a place of assembly for men', candidates should think of its meaning as the annual pilgrimage to the ka'ba in Makka, and of its significance as a link to Abraham and to the Prophet Muhammad, and as a means of uniting Muslims.

Phrases and words answered well included (1), on which many candidates gave the meaning of Imam as 'example' or 'model'; (3), on which many identified the ka'ba and referred to the annual pilgrimage; (6), on which many were able to identify the miraculous night journey; and (10), on which many commented on the attributes of God (though a few thought this was a reference to the Prophet).

Other phrases caused difficulty, particularly: (2), on which few were able to identify Abraham's 'offspring', whether prophets who were his descendants or good believers who are his spiritual descendants; (4), which some thought referred to the ka'ba; (7), which some identified as the Prophet's mosque in Medina.

Question 2

This is usually well answered, and answers this year were no exception. Candidates are asked to identify teachings in these Hadith about belief and action, and the best answers will give a clear comment about each of these. These comments may be explanations entirely in their own words, or they may be references to a Qur'an verse or another Hadith. Either way of answering is acceptable, but what is important is that the point should be made clearly and unambiguously. If candidates refer to the Qur'an or a Hadith, they should be careful to explain how these relate to the Hadith being answered and how they elucidate its teaching. A list of unexplained references will earn no marks (see the **General comments** section above).

There were no obvious problems with any of the Hadith set in this paper, though in (a), some candidates failed to explain the significance of the hand and tongue as sources of verbal and physical abuse; in (f), some were unable to explain the meaning of 'a door of safety'; and in (h), they were often unable to give the full range of the meaning of al-tuhur (purity).

Particularly good answers explained how in (c), reward or punishment is linked to conduct in this life; in (e), how God's treatment of oneself is related to one's own treatment of others; and how in (i), concern for others is a natural part of a good Muslim's living.

Question 3

This question was generally not well answered, mainly for the reason given in the **General comments** section above, that most candidates seemed unable to think of examples from the life of the Prophet that provide models for Muslims in their various relationships. Nevertheless, some candidates whose minds must have been particularly alert during the examination wrote excellent answers, in which they gave four suitable examples, and then showed how these indicated a particular virtue of the Prophet and how Muslims today might copy it.

The question required careful reading, and not all candidates gave it sufficient attention. As a result, some included more than one example in their answers to each part, and did not go on to comment on their moral significance, while others mentioned only general virtues of the Prophet (e.g. he was always caring and always friendly to others), without referring to particular examples.

Good answers to part (a) included such examples from the Prophet's life as the following: in (i), his pairing of Muhajirun and Ansar as brothers; in (ii), his kind treatment of the old lady in Mecca who threw rubbish on him; in (iii), his fair treatment of the Meccan prisoners after Badr, or his act of forgiving the Meccans when he captured the town; and in (iv), his fair dealing on behalf of Khadija.

In their answers to part (b), some candidates wrote directly about their own experiences or those of people they knew; some clearly invented situations, but that did not matter as long as they were showing they could apply the examples from the Prophet's life to their own circumstances. Other candidates appear to have felt more reticence, or were unable to apply the teachings from the Prophet Muhammad's life to their own.

Question 4

This proved a popular question, though was not answered as well as the Examiners expected because candidates were not able to answer part **(b)** very fully.

In **(a)(i)**, candidates appeared to know more about Khadija's life before she met the Prophet than when she was married to him. They were able to name her previous husbands and children, but then often said nothing about her later experiences of persecution and suffering at the hands of the Meccans. Surely these later elements of her life should be included more fully in a short account than the earlier ones.

Again, in **(ii)**, many candidates appeared to forget about 'A'isha's involvement in politics during the rules of the first caliphs. Surprisingly few mentioned the Battle of the Camel, and not many gave details about her importance as a source of Hadiths and Islamic teachings.

For **(iii)**, candidates who answered in Fatima often did better than others in this part. They included all the main items known about her, including her closeness to her father, and her marriage and family.

Part **(b)** asked about the relationship between each of the two figures and the Prophet. Candidates had to take care not to repeat here comments already made in part **(a)**, and in fact to reserve comments about the significance of their figures for this part rather than making them earlier.

Too many generalisations appeared in answers, such as, 'Khadija always supported the Prophet in everything' or, 'Fatima loved her father above everything'. There may be truth in such statements, but explanations of the figures' significance would have to be more specific.

Question 5

This was also popular, and was generally well answered.

In **(a)**, most candidates were able to answer this part with ease, and gained 4 marks. Some answers included biographical notes about the ten individuals; these were not asked for, and were not credited.

There were many good answers in **(b)** on Abu Bakr, explaining his close support for the Prophet and detailing his loyalty through his actions. But details about 'Uthman and 'Ali were fewer. Some candidates forgot about 'Uthman's part in the negotiations between the Muslims and Meccans, and others forgot about 'Ali's part in the Prophet's departure from Mecca for Medina. General comments such as, 'Hazrat 'Uthman gave all his wealth to help the Prophet', or 'Hazrat 'Ali was always loyal towards the Prophet' could not be credited because they were not sufficiently detailed to be explanations.