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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.**

ISLAMIC STUDIES

GCE Advanced Subsidiary Level

<p>Paper 8053/01</p>

<p>Paper 1</p>

General comments

In general, performance appeared to be slightly better than last year with the exception of a few Centres. However, there was a general problem of candidates not clearly distinguishing their answers where they were asked to – for example, ‘explain *four* ways...’ or ‘outline *three* major beliefs...’. This creates problems when marking as the Examiner has to make decisions on behalf of the candidate as to where each part starts and finishes. Furthermore, in most questions with two parts, the first part was often tackled satisfactorily while the second part was not.

There was also a marked lack of reference to relevant Qur’anic passages to support arguments. Since such references are required for higher marks, this issue needs to be addressed urgently. It is this that shows insight into the syllabus and, hence, it has to be taken seriously. Most of the answers lacked in-depth treatment and critical stance. At this level of their education, where they are preparing to enter into Higher Education, candidates must be introduced to some form of criticality where they could take a stand and even possibly query particular ‘received opinions’. Criticality does not necessarily mean rejecting or doubting the import of the opinion, but it is a way of reflecting further on it and that is very helpful for academic development.

Sometimes points were made without discussion supported by specific examples. This reduces marks to a mere average or, at best, just above average. Points made should always be discussed in full, as much as time will allow, with specific and relevant examples for support.

Comments on specific questions

Section A

Question 1

This was a popular question on the beliefs and practices of the pagan Arabs of Makkah. On the whole, it was well answered, but there was a problem with some candidates in identifying the three beliefs/practices, as they tended not to clearly distinguish them in the script. Again, some merged the answers between **(a)** and **(b)**. Furthermore, very little reference was made to the specific Qur’anic passages critiquing the pagan practices and beliefs.

- (a)** The question was looking for clearly identified *jahili* beliefs and practices with allusions to Qur’anic contexts in which they have been mentioned. Issues regarding the religious and the socio-political set-up of the *jahili* society should have provided enough points for discussion. Issues like: Idolatry, superstition, social organisation, morality, treatment of women, treatment of female babies, raids and warfare were some the main points expected.
- (b)** The second part asked for an explanation of why the Qur’an was critical of any two points raised in **(a)**. Candidates were expected to give details about the Qur’anic teachings that had been contravened. For higher marks, they were expected to show a confident understanding of the way in which those beliefs and practices departed from the Qur’anic teaching. This is where good candidates would show their familiarity with basic Qur’anic teachings on the subjects mentioned and use cross-referencing to support their discussion.

Question 2

This was not a very popular question. For those who answered it, there was the problem of not properly distinguishing between the two parts on the qualities of the Prophet Muhammad: Prophet and Statesman. Many candidates failed to address the actual question and simply outlined the aspects of the biography of the Prophet. There were some good general answers on the *Khulafaa al-Rashidun* which has nothing to do with the question. Candidates were expected to show very clearly qualities of the Prophet, indicating his prophetic status and also those showing that he was statesmanlike. Good candidates were to show that the qualities of a statesman flowed out of the prophetic office and therefore the two are linked. Hence, excellent candidates would have gone on to question the very premise of the distinction. Generally, the issues to be raised include the qualities of the prophet exhibited in Makkah; how he dealt with the socio-political and religious issues of the community; how he related his experience to the people; how he reacted to them when persecuted; his experience in al-Taif; the attitude in Madinah; leadership qualities exhibited in the various roles he played; the years of struggle; attitudes towards prisoners of war and enemies in general; the Treaty of Hudaibiyya; and the Fall of Makkah and amnesty.

Question 3

This was probably the least popular question – on the policies of the Rightly Guided Caliphs. The few who answered it did not clearly distinguish between (a) and (b), providing general information on the Caliphs which did not address the question. They often touched on Abu Bakr and 'Umar, almost ignoring the periods of 'Uthman and Ali. The question was looking for particular actions of the Caliphs showing that they were aware of the legacy of the Prophet and carried out policies to continue and expand on them. Reference should have been made to: Abu Bakr's insistence on carrying out the raids to the north, his reluctance to collect the Qur'an, and the Riddah wars; 'Umar's readiness to abide by new decisions reached at a consensus, his various activities to expand Islam; 'Uthman and the authoritative collection of the Qur'an; and 'Ali's concern for Islamic unity. Better answers were expected to discuss the activities of the Caliphs in tackling new problems using methods founded on the Prophetic legacy. Excellent candidates were expected to show awareness of the huge challenges faced by the Caliphs in living up to expectation in following the footsteps of the Prophet.

Section B**Question 4**

This was a very popular question on *Surat Al-Ikhlās*, but many failed to provide cross-referencing within the Qur'an, simply commenting on the text of the Surah. The answers should have demonstrated detailed knowledge of and the significance of the Surah. These should have been focused on the main theme of the Surah *Tawhid*, but candidates were also expected to refer to other passages where the theme is mentioned to support the discussion. Furthermore, they were to explain, with confidence, the fundamental importance of the belief in Oneness of God in Islamic belief and practice.

Question 5

This was not a popular question, but those who attempted it showed a good familiarity with the general stories of Moses and related them often with details that were not necessary. Even though most candidates referred to Surah *al-Qasas*, they were expected to show familiarity with the storyline of Surah 2: 47-74 as well, since both are in the syllabus. The performance was better for the first part compared to the second part. In the first part they were expected to give the general teachings of the Qur'an about Moses from these passages, including his general background, his experience at the burning bush, his call to prophethood and his experience in Egypt before the Pharaoh. The second part was looking for ways in which the experiences of Moses resembled those of the Prophet – for example, their childhood, call to prophethood, their experience of persecution, fleeing their homes, eventual triumph, their experience of being misunderstood, their resolve and commitment to their call.

Question 6

This was a popular question on the compilation of the Quran and generally well answered. However, only a few candidates gave excellent answers, showing familiarity with the details of the topic. Answers in part (a) should have started from the period of Abu Bakr's *Khilafah*; references to the battle of Yamamah, 'Umar's advice, the collection and the *Mushaf* of Hafsa; 'Uthman's collection, the news of the variant readings, his decision to issue an authoritative version, the part played by Zayd b. Thabit and his team, and 'Uthman's decision to destroy the inauthentic copies. Part (b) should have included: the threat of the text disappearing or being corrupted, the desire to show continuity with the past and to offer the text 'immortality', and other pragmatic reasons.

Section C**Question 7**

This was a straightforward question on almsgiving and fasting, but many answers were disappointing. Often, candidates would not give that much detail for the first part, and many failed to relate the second part to a particular Muslim community as the question specifically demanded. There were also cases where candidates confused the requirements of **(a)** with those of **(b)**. The question demanded a thorough account of the two institutions in Islam, looking at their importance. It looked for accounts as to how the two institutions enable community to focus on the Islamic faith, link it with God and unite its members. The second part was to provide details of the specific circumstances of the chosen country, pointing out how the institutions help in the real human context.

Question 8

This was a rather unpopular question, on three ways in which God communicates knowledge and awareness of himself to created human beings. The few who attempted it did not provide adequate answers, tending to enumerate Books, Prophets, and Angels as the three ways. Many possibly did not understand the question and hence deviated from the expected line of discussion. It was expected that there would be a clear reference to the three chosen ways which may include: revelation, knowledge from the natural world, mystical experience and reason. It was expected that candidates would then discuss the relative importance of each of these as God's way of communicating with humankind and how they relate to each other. References from the Qur'an and Hadith to support points made are also encouraged.

Question 9

Answers to this question, on Resurrection and the Day of Judgement, were not outstanding. Some candidates answered it satisfactorily, but many failed to outline the nature of Resurrection and how the Judgement related to everyday life. The question demanded outlining what happens at Resurrection including discussing how conduct in this life is judged. Good answers were expected to include details about living a life according to the teachings of the Qur'an and the *Sunnah*. Candidates should have discussed issues including: responsibility, accountability, morality, fairness, justice, charitableness and humility as some of the effects of the beliefs. Relevant Qur'anic and Ahadith references were expected.

Section D**Question 10**

This was a very popular question on the *Sunnah*, and candidates did quite well in answering it. They were able to express the relationship between the Qur'an and the *Sunnah* very well. Even though some provided full answers, others gave basic examples. The question asked for a discussion of the ways the two bases of law are related and hence, an account of the relationship was expected. This should include examples indicating the complementary nature of the *Sunnah* and how the latter acts as a commentary on the former. Specific examples, including *Salah*, *Saum*, *Zakah*, *Hajj* and general activities in Muslim life, could be identified to show the difficulty of understanding some parts of the Qur'an without recourse to the *Sunnah*. Excellent candidates should be able to refer to the argument of the anti-hadith group, who suggest that the Qur'an must be the only frame of reference and that the *Sunnah* is not needed.

Question 11

This question, on the two legal sources of consensus and analogy, was not popular or particularly well answered. Many simply provided definitions, rather than relating it in detail to the wider issues of jurisprudence. The question demanded accounts of the use of each source, as well as an indication of awareness of the other sources of law and of the fact that consensus and analogy are subordinate to the Qur'an and the *Sunnah*. Excellent candidates were to give a detailed explanation of how the Qur'an and *Sunnah* are taken into account when exercising consensus and analogy, and how the experts involved will always be scholars in the primary sources.

Question 12

Not a particularly popular question, this question on the *Shari'ah* was generally poorly answered. Many candidates failed to clearly outline the four examples required and tended to generalise without specifically identifying particular areas of the *Shari'ah*. This question was eliciting a discussion on the problems and challenges faced by Muslims in a named country in modern times as they seek to live by the principles of the *Shari'ah*. Candidates were expected to examine issues including: education, legislation, food, dress, funerals, marriage, divorce, inheritance, punishment, financial transactions, business operations and general social life. Candidates were expected to comment on the way in which Muslims who observe the *Shari'ah* are influenced, with specific examples from the chosen country.