

ISLAMIYAT

Paper 2058/01

Paper 1

General comments

These general comments apply to both Paper 2058/01 and Paper 2058/02.

This year saw a considerable rise in the entry for the examination. While it was clear that the majority of candidates were well prepared for this examination, the overall quality of work was lower than in recent years. There were some excellent scripts, though these were fewer than previously, and the majority of scripts appeared to reflect the familiar characteristic of answers that were hastily written and insufficiently thought through. Advice has been given repeatedly in past Principle Examiner's reports about how to guide candidates to spend time thinking about what the question is asking and to write notes to help them in their answer. But there were few indications of this strategy in the scripts from these examinations. Answers frequently went off the point, and many of them incorporated elements that seemed to reflect rote learning of model answers or of the Mark Schemes from previous examinations. There were few fresh accounts or discussions that showed candidates were thinking for themselves. If a candidate wishes to gain a really high mark, there is no alternative to learning the facts outlined in the syllabus and then comprehending the implications in them in order to connect what is taught in the great sources of Islam and what was said and done by the first generation of Muslims with life today. This cannot be learned in rote form, and unless teachers equip candidates to think for themselves they may be depriving them of the means to gain high grades.

As teachers will know, the intention of the syllabus is to enable candidates to gain a good factual and critical knowledge of the fundamental teachings and history of Islam. Candidates are encouraged to show this by being able to answer questions of factual and descriptive kinds and also questions requiring critical ability. It is therefore extremely important for candidates to be given the required facts and helped to know how to understand their significance and implications in order to apply them in their own experience. Usually Examiners have been impressed by the factual knowledge of the majority of candidates and by the critical ability of many of them. But this time there were serious lapses in factual knowledge, with some candidates not knowing, for example, what 'Id al-Adha is (2058/1 **Question 3(d)**) or the basics of the life of the Caliph 'Uthman (2058/2 **Question 4(a)**). And in the past Examiners have applauded the ability of some candidates to write with critical maturity. However, there was less of this in this examination, so that, for example, few seemed to understand why the Makkans fought against the Muslims of Madina (2058/1 **Question 2(b)**) or why the Scribes of the Prophet were important (2058/2 **Question 5(a)**). Some candidates scored lower than 10 marks in one or other of their papers, showing serious lack of basic knowledge and critical ability. While there may be a range of reasons for this, teachers would be advised to check that they are giving full factual coverage of the syllabus and helping candidates to understand the significance of what they are learning.

Teachers will know of the learning aids that are available. New books appear frequently (though each one should be evaluated for its merits), and the following should now be familiar to most teachers:

- David R Thomas and Mustafa Draper, *Islamiyat, a core text for O Level*, Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2004, ISBN 0-19-597783-1, a textbook intended for candidates
- David R Thomas and Mustafa Draper, *Islamiyat, a core text for O Level, Teacher's Guide*, Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2004, ISBN 0-19-597784-X, a handbook intended for teachers who use the textbook
- *Islamiyat 2058 General Certificate of Education Ordinary Level, Standards Booklet*, Cambridge: University of Cambridge International Examinations, 2004, a handbook containing comments on answers to questions set in recent examinations.

The first two of these should be available locally, and the third can be ordered from CIE (www.cie.org.uk).

Teachers should know about the on-line Discussion Group, hosted by the Principal Examiner. This provides an opportunity to discuss ways of teaching the syllabus and problems encountered in doing this. To join the Group, go to www.cie.org.uk, and follow the instructions on the Islamiyat syllabus page.

A last point: some candidates answer a part of a question and then move on to another question before returning to the remaining part of the earlier question. Ideally, candidates should answer questions in the order given in the paper, but it is understandable why under examination conditions some move around in this way. Teachers are asked to request candidates to say clearly where the various parts of questions are answered by stating at the end of an answered part e.g. that 'part **(b)** is answered on p. 6'.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

Candidates are asked here to comment on the main teachings contained in two of the passages chosen from the list given in the syllabus. What this means is that they should look for the main Qur'anic themes that appear in the passages and also the way in which each passage expresses something significant about the theme.

- (a) The main teaching of this passage is the character of God, and this passage particularly mentions his knowledge and power, with the throne denoting the latter attribute. Good answers would have commented on such points as: God is unique, and in total control of the creation; he is beyond human comprehension; nothing outside him affects him; his throne represents his power and majesty.

Many candidates answered this well, pointing out the main attributes of God that are mentioned in the passage, though some came close to summarising it.

- (b) This is about the nature of prophethood and particularly Moses' call by God, who shows him a characteristic miracle. Good answers would have included: Moses was called suddenly without any foreknowledge (similarly to the call of the Prophet Muhammad); God demonstrates his power to his prophet by causing the miracle of the staff; Moses, like other messengers of God, is assured by God that he is protected from harm.

Many candidates went into long accounts of Moses as a young man, his fleeing from Egypt, his marrying, and so on. These details have nothing to do with the teachings of this passage as such. They may be necessary background so that candidates can understand the passage, but they are not asked for in the question.

- (c) This is about a just and caring society, and the example of hypocritical believers is used to show how not to behave. A good answer would have referred to: people who only pretend to be religious; the error of failing in care for others; the importance of basing actions on sincere belief.

Many answers paraphrased the passage rather than getting to the heart of what it teaches.

Teachers are advised to tell candidates that they should make answers to each part of this question about $\frac{1}{2}$ to $\frac{3}{4}$ of a side long. If an answer is longer than a side of paper, it is likely to contain material that is not directly relevant to the question.

Question 2

- (a) Good answers would have given the dates of the two battles, the circumstances immediately before them, the main events of the battles, and the aftermath.

Many answers contained most major elements of the battles, and a good number of high marks were gained for this part. Some candidates clearly knew the events of the battles thoroughly, but some omitted to mention such details as the numbers of the two sides at Badr, the way in which the prisoners after Badr were treated, and the effects of the reversal at Uhud.

- (b) Some answers to this were excellent, explaining the threat the Muslims were thought to pose to Makkah trade, the differences in religion between the two sides, the threat they saw to their leading position in Arabia. However, these answers were in a clear minority, and some candidates appeared to have no idea why these battles took place, suggesting they had learnt the facts without understanding their significance.

Question 3

This was the more popular of the two optional questions, though it was not in general answered well. It asked about the significance of these items related to the annual pilgrimage in both beliefs and practices. Candidates were required to write about both in order to gain full marks for any part.

- (a) Most candidates knew what the ka'ba is and were able to say something about its link with Abraham and its place in the pilgrimage. But only a few mentioned it as the direction in which prayer must be performed and the rite of circumambulation.
- (b) Most candidates answered this well. The best answers referred to the requirement of *ihram* for the pilgrimage and detailed what it is for men and for women. A few mentioned how it removes distinctions between people and makes everyone equal.
- (c) This was not answered well. Few candidates knew about the *wuquf* at Arafat or its importance, and some thought it was the place where pebbles are gathered before the stoning of the devil.
- (d) Most candidates knew that this involves the killing of an animal, and were able to link this with Abraham and the call to sacrifice his son.

Question 4

This was less popular than **Question 3**, and most attempts showed that candidates did not know very much about the nature of Hadiths.

- (a) Good answers here would have explained how the *isnad* is made up, and outlined the character of the individual transmitters and the requirement that they should have been in a position to meet and exchange knowledge. They would have gone on to explain how the *matn* must agree with the Qur'an, reliable Hadiths, common sense, and so on. A few candidates wrote very well, but the majority gave sketchy answers that failed to explain why and how these two parts of the Hadith are used to check its authenticity.
- (b) Few candidates knew the differences between these two types of Hadith collections. Some gave very full answers, explaining that the one gathers Hadiths according to their first transmitter and the other according to their subject matter. However, many candidates did not appear to recognise the two terms.

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Paper 2058/02

Paper 2

See also General Comments on Paper 1.

Question 1

Most candidates seemed to know now that in this question they are asked to make two points, one about the meaning of the words underlined (not their English translation, but who or what might be referred to, or who might be speaking), and the other about the importance of what is said here (what wider significance may be involved). Marks are given for accuracy in identifying these two elements in each underlined phrase, and candidates who write about background context or about that passage as a whole are not credited.

There were a number of common mistakes in answers:

In (1) some candidates mixed up 'them' and 'you', identifying the Muslims as 'them' and the Makkans as 'you'.

In (3) many answers commented as though this was a piece of general advice rather than a conclusion arising from the battle of Badr.

In (4-8) many candidates failed to see that the immediate addressee is an individual (this cannot be indicated in English, which has only 'you' for singular and plural, though in the original Arabic it is clear), and therefore almost certainly the Prophet, meaning that any generalised teaching given in the phrases must be applied from the specific advice given there.

In (10) only a few answers identified the Spirit as Gabriel.

Question 2

In this question candidates are asked to identify teachings on 1) belief, and 2) action in the seven chosen Hadiths, so good answers will consist of brief remarks outlining these two features, rather than general accounts about the Hadith. Careful thinking about these two features is very important in this question if candidates hope to do well.

There were some very good answers to this question, though in some answers there were signs that candidates were simply reproducing the wording of past Mark Schemes. Common mistakes included:

In (a) many said that bribery is unlawful, but did not say why or how.

In (b) there was a tendency to paraphrase the Hadith.

In (i) many wrote about the community of believers rather than the need for individuals to be ready to help and ready to seek help.

Question 3

(a) This question clearly asked for three examples from the Prophet's life. Candidates could have worked out that 2 marks were allowed for each example, depending on how much detail was given. Some wrote about qualities of the Prophet's character, rather than actual examples from his life. Good answers would have given such examples as his experience at al-Ta'if, his conquering of Makka, or his treatment of Jews in Madina.

Some candidates referred to the incident of the Prophet allowing non-Muslim visitors to pray in the mosque at Madina. This is a reference to the visit of Christians from Najran. Most candidates identified them as Jews.

- (b) This was a more demanding part, though some candidates successfully linked the Prophet's conduct in the examples they had chosen with events in the present to show how Muslims today can be guided by what he did in his time. Answers such as these, which show that candidates are thinking for themselves as they ponder over the question, are exactly what Examiners look for.
- (c) On the whole, this part was not answered well. Some candidates appeared to think that taking interest was like taking a bribe, and most seemed to have difficulty in saying what the teachings about it are. A few, however, understood what interest in financial dealings is and how one side is advantaged at the expense of the other when it is used in transactions. The best answers supplemented their explanations with quotations of appropriate verses from the Qur'an.

Question 4

This was a popular question, and part (a) was generally well answered, though part (b) caused problems.

- (a) Most candidates were able to describe the two parts of `Uthman's career very fully. The best answers included the following points: he was one of the first converts; he married two of the Prophet's daughters; he migrated to Ethiopia and Madina; he contributed his wealth to help the community; as Caliph he continued the policy of expanding the empire; he placed relatives in prominent positions; he ordered a full collection of the Qur'an to replace copies that were allowing wrong readings.
- (b) Fewer candidates answered this part well, and some described how he met his death rather than explaining why he was killed. They did not appear to know about the accusations levelled against him, or the grievances brought to him that were the immediate cause of his killing.

Question 5

- (a) While almost no-one confused scribes with scriptures, few candidates recognised the importance of the men who were on hand to write down a recitation from the Prophet when he received it, or the significance of their knowledge of the Qur'an deriving from their closeness to him.
- (b) Again, many candidates seemed at a loss to describe how the scribes went about their work. Good answers referred to the scribes writing down revelations from the Prophet's dictation, their use of various surfaces for this, and their assistance to the Prophet because of his being illiterate.
- (c) A surprising number of candidates found this straightforward descriptive question hard. The reason is that they did not appear to know much about the figure of Zayd or his leadership in preserving the Qur'an.

The fact that such a major figure was almost unknown to many candidates points to the need for teachers to ensure that all parts of the syllabus are covered thoroughly. It is unwise to omit any part or to predict from past papers what topic is likely to come up and concentrate on that at the expense of others. Such a strategy could seriously disadvantage candidates, as is maybe exemplified in this question.