

Examiners' Report/
Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2013

International GCSE Islamiyat
(4IS0/01)

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The Examination.

Entry: Approximately nine hundred and fifty candidates entered this examination, another significant increase following that noted a year ago. It is likely that the end of the January examination played a considerable part in this increase, but another factor concerns the increase in the U.K. entry – 124 candidates this year compared to 35 in 2012.

The Question Paper: In accordance with the specification, the question paper sought to test candidates on their factual knowledge, their understanding of the salient facts and, finally, their evaluation of this material. The Mark Scheme indicates how these assessment objectives may be achieved.

Performance: Section One - translations of Surahs, Ayats and Ahadis – allows candidates of even fairly modest ability to score as well as “A” or “B” students. (This observation applies particularly to overseas candidates.) Thus many are able to get their performances off to a good start. On the other hand, the brightest managed well all parts of the extended answers, as well as Section One. Others, less able, sometimes misunderstood the part (c) questions, while the weakest in ability failed to cope successfully with any parts of the paper.

Presentation: Marks are not awarded for handwriting skills but most candidates are to be congratulated on their neat writing and accurate spelling. This continues to achieve a praiseworthy standard.

Report on candidates' responses – Section 1: The Qur'an and Hadith

The majority of candidates were able to translate the Arabic passages effectively and score full marks, but the associated questions were not answered as well, candidates giving answers which were too vague or not explained.

Question 1 (a)(i): **Al-Qadr** – Nearly all translated this well.

Question 1 (a)(ii): A minority missed out "cave".

Question 1 (a)(iii): Mostly accurate answers.

Question 1 (a)(iv): Some candidates just repeated "night is better than a thousand months" instead of analyzing why.

Question 1 (b)(i): **Al-Kauthar** – Translated well.

Question 1 (b) (ii): Most remarked how the death of his sons led to the taunt that his message would not continue, but some just referred to the throwing of words and stones. .

Question 1 (b) (iii): The meaning of Kauthar as an abundance of wisdom granted to the Prophet by Allah seemed beyond the reach of most candidates.

Question 1 (b)(iv): Not many answered this well, many settling on a reference to Abraham sacrificing Ishmael.

Question 2 (a)(i): Most translated correctly.

Question 2 (a)(ii): Some referred to his work collecting Zakah payments, etc., when a simple reference to his truthfulness was required.

Question 2 (a)(iii): No problem.

Question 2 (b)(ii): Many failed to identify the nisab correctly, most discussing the rate of zakah instead of the level of savings above which zakah is paid.

Question 2 (b)(iii): Some commented that sadaqah is different because it can be given to non-Muslims!

Question 2 (c)(ii): Most had a correct answer.

Question 2 (c)(iii): Instead of linking to the idea of wise guides with a lifetime's experience, some wrote that the elderly are old and need attention as a child does!

Question 3 (a): Generally good answers to all parts of this question, but some floundered in their attempts to identify hypocrisy.

Question 3 (b)(i): Translated well, but some missed out "develop" and a few produced the wrong translation altogether.

Question 3 (b)(ii): Practically all knew this.

Question 3 (b)(iii): A few answered too briefly so that it could be any teaching, e.g., "so they could live a good life".

Question 3 (c)(i): Well translated.

Question 3(c)(ii): Most simply wrote (inaccurately) "in Paradise".

Question 3(c)(iii): Some very good answers – a few just wrote "because Allah told us to".

As stated earlier, some candidates of only moderate ability managed to score quite heavily on this Section, enabling them to achieve reasonable total marks overall.

Report on candidates' responses – Section 2: The Life, Teaching and Achievements of the Prophet

Question 4 (a): The more successful candidates thought about the Prophet's teachings and mentioned specific terms, such as "shirk" and "usury". Disappointingly, others missed any reference to sharp practices, bribery and cheating. Human rights were often specifically identified – slaves, women and orphans.

Question 4 (b): Much of this repeated part (a), in some instances word for word, but many noted how the Prophet built a mosque in Madinah and later destroyed Makkah's idols. Yet hardly any mentioned the penalties he imposed for breaking his instructions, e.g., cutting of hand for theft.

Question 4 (c): Some candidates failed to heed the instruction to use **three** examples from modern life. Weaker candidates gave general examples of how Muslims defend the rights of women, orphans and the poor. Stronger candidates developed these points and gave examples of how this is achieved, such as through granting women property rights, equality in relationships and the right to an education. There were also some strong responses from candidates who reflected well upon changes within their own countries and the contemporary issues that they were dealing with.

Question 5 (a): Candidates struggled with this part of the Question, just mentioning freedom of religion and the Prophet generously accepting for a time Jewish rites and practices. A number referred to their final expulsion from Madinah, but many candidates scored poorly, explaining the actions of the Jews and Christians as opposed to the Prophet's relations with them.

Question 5 (b): Successful answers gave **three** distinct reasons why the Prophet was given the title “Seal of the Prophets”. Some development of each point was needed for two marks – for example, stating that the Prophet was the apex of humanity, supported by ways in which this could be seen. The most common responses related to the revelation of the Qur’an.

Question 5 (c): Here there was a fairly balanced mix between those agreeing with the statement and those disagreeing with it. The stronger answers took both sides of the argument into consideration and then still reached a clear conclusion. The potential dangers of losing one’s faith and changing one’s behaviour were mentioned; others remarked how Muslim’s should learn from the Prophet’s example. On the other hand, candidates noted how the quotation simply says that Muslims should “be careful”, not to avoid mixing with other cultures altogether. Opportunities for learning about other faiths and spreading one’s own beliefs was mentioned, as were respecting the views of others, countering terrorism by mixing with other people, and so on. In other words, there were some thoughtful and interesting discussions, which were awarded due credit.

Question 6 (a): Many candidates picked up full marks by showing a comprehensive knowledge of the events leading to the conquest of Makkah. Those who did not gain full marks concentrated too much on the events leading up to the Treaty of Hdaybiyyah and its dissolution.

Question 6 (b): Most candidates read the question carefully and made reference to the account previously written, but a minority just wrote general comments, such as praying to Allah before and during battles, referring to battles by name and the treatment of prisoners. The Prophet’s

trust in Allah's guidance and his destruction of the idols were clear demonstrations of his faith, while his forgiveness of his enemies and the respect of his followers showed his character. One or two commented on his modest, humble nature, illustrated at his entry into the city: valid comments which duly received credit.

Question 6 (c): Candidates acknowledged the importance of bringing about peace; weaker candidates, however, focused too much upon this, as opposed to supporting ways in which it could be achieved. Many answers referred to patience and the need to negotiate rather than resort to violence. Candidates remarked that it was important to establish peace in one's own community before looking to the world; others that Muslims should interact with non-Muslims, although some answers stated that violence might be necessary to defend Islam. Links to the Prophet and the importance of obedience to Islamic principles were also mentioned. Altogether there were some very interesting, thoughtful discussions.

4. Report on candidates' responses – Section 3 (A) (for Sunni students)

Question 7 (a): Probably the least popular question on the paper: nevertheless, a good number did attempt it with varying measures of success. Thus in part (a) there were references to the sayings and actions of the Prophet – hardly any to his silent approval of others – illustrated by specific teachings from daily life. Stronger candidates gave more appropriate examples, such as teachings about equality and how to pray, while a few rightly noted the technical terms of qaul, fil and taqrin.

Question 7 (b): Some candidates failed to focus on the main thrust of the question, commenting on the **process** of selecting genuine Hadith rather than explaining **why** authenticity was important. Nevertheless, there were several references to the importance of identifying genuine Hadith, so that later generations might not be led down wrong paths. Incidentally, hardly any candidates referred to the threefold nature of classification – “sound”, “good” or “weak”, not a difficult concept, but useful to the question as a whole.

Question 7 (c): This part of the Question was answered most successfully. Candidates correctly commented on the ways in which the Hadith clarify the teachings of the Qur’an and relate to many modern issues. Well-known references to the practices of Salah and Zakah were prominent in many answers and gained due credit.

Question 8 (a): a straightforward beginning to this Question – most candidates had no difficulty in identifying six duties expected to be performed by Hajj pilgrims. “Bullet points”, that is, simple lists, expressing duties in one or two words, were not awarded full marks. In addition, some concentrated too closely on the **preparations** for Hajj and less carefully on the duties themselves. But there were no serious problems and most achieved full marks.

Question 8 (b): Most candidates had no difficulty writing on the history behind the Hajj practices: most popular of these were the references to the running between Safa and Marwa, the stoning of the pillars and the sacrifice of an animal, but whereas some just identified the links, stronger responses explained them in more detail, outlining the significance of the events. In this way they produced **developed** points (and gained more marks). A few

wrote only on the Prophet – wearing ihram, doing tawaf and preaching his last sermon, missing the important phrase in the Question – “**these duties**”. (See General Comment).

Question 8 (c): Again answered well, with a mix of answers both agreeing and disagreeing with the statement, with many answers addressing both sides of the argument. The positive effects of the Hajj were brought out, including the benefits to the individual and the ways in which it may strengthen the Ummah. (A few noted that Muslims are so bad at following their religion these days that they need to go on Hajj to have their sins forgiven!). Answers which disagreed with the statement emphasized the other pillars of Islam, but some of these arguments, though valid, were often repetitive.

Question 9 (a)(i): A few answered absolutely correctly but “stoned to death” appeared, wrongly, in the majority of answers. These took their cue from the hadith, not the Qur’an, **as stated in the Question**. Nevertheless, many rightly identified adultery as unlawful in Islam with a punishment of one hundred lashes and confining to the house for female offenders.

Question 9 (a)(ii): Again, a few very good answers, but the teaching of the Qur’an was not well-known. Some were able to identify “the waiting period”, the iddah and the three repudiations but there were also many extraneous details included, not required by the Question, such as not divorcing during menstruation or pregnancy. Similarly, candidates commented that “divorce is the most detestable act that Allah has permitted”, a well-known saying but **not** relevant to this Question.

Question 9 (b): Many candidates scored well by emphasizing the equal treatment the Prophet extended to his wives, but others were concerned

with more general points about the Prophet sharing household chores. Similarly, specific points about the upbringing of his daughters occasionally brought out his teaching them Islam and making for them respectable marriages. Some points, however, were too general, simply saying that the Prophet set a good example for loving his daughters, even though the custom was that daughters were often killed! Weak answers spent too much time writing about Khadijah, Aisha and Fatima.

Question 9 (c): There was some misunderstanding of the words "make a difficult marriage work". Some wrote only on the importance of marriage. The stronger answers referred to Allah's dislike of divorce and the effect that a divorce has on the wife, children and community. Weaker answers had a narrower range of points and instead of "unpacking" the question just wrote about the process of divorce. "Making a difficult marriage work" pleases Allah, encourages faithfulness, loyalty and co-operation, and honours obligations. A brief discussion of points like these would soon earn the six marks on offer.

Report on candidates' responses – Section 3 (B) (for Shi'ah students)

Too few answers from this Section to justify any comment.

6. General Remarks

Reading the Question

Particular words, phrases and instructions appear quite frequently on this paper. They may appear innocuous but to ignore them is to choose the road to low marks and a poor grade. For example, **Question 4(b)** spoke of “putting teachings into **practice...**” In other words, a link was required between 4(a) the teachings and 4(b) their practical application. Many candidates just looked for three practical measures (sometimes out of date) without considering the links. For example, there is an obvious link between ‘a belief in One God’ and ‘building a mosque’; honesty and justice in business led the Prophet to establish penalties (punishments) in law – for example, cutting of the thief’s hand. Human rights suggested caring for the poor and underprivileged, so leading to ideas about charity – Zakah and sadaqah.

Apart from questions which designate how they should be answered – “**three** examples” in 4(c), “**three** ways” in 5(b) and “**three** of these duties” in 8(b), consider in 5(a) the Prophet’s relationship with Jews and Christians, that is, not theirs with him but his with them (a significant difference).

More simply, consider the words “Use your account...” in 6(b), which **should** make the candidate look back to his account in (a). If those words are ignored, the whole lay-out of the answer is undermined and marks are inevitably lost.

Advice for Weaker Candidates:

Those who find the essay-style questions difficult should endeavour to score heavily on Section One. Aiming to obtain at least twenty out of the twenty-eight marks on offer should put their total mark on a par – or very near – that reached by some stronger candidates. Of course, doing well on Section One is not just a gift; what is achievable, however, is thorough learning of the Surahs, Ayats and Ahadis specified in the syllabus. This competence is surely within the capability of the vast majority. Admittedly, such knowledge will need the support of single-sentence responses to questions but, again, accurate answers to many of these should be achievable by all but the least capable.

Advice for Stronger Candidates.

What was apparent in the responses of many stronger candidates this year was a failure to develop points made, especially in the third part of the essay-type questions, and so lose the opportunity of scoring high marks. For instance, Question 4(c) asked for the use of “**three** examples from modern life”; three were duly given, but in many cases consisting of simple points earning only one mark each, whereas if the examples had been developed, they would at least have doubled their marks – that is, six in total instead of three. In 5(b) candidates were asked to explain “the seal of the Prophets”. Many made correct suggestions but again failed to develop these points. In response to 8(b) – the duties of the Hajj – incidents were accurately stated but again in an undeveloped way, so that only a basic allusion was given. It may be that teachers need to draw the attention of their pupils to the availability of these “bonus” points; certainly the use of

their development may help those stronger candidates to enjoy the high grades that their ability deserves.

Ofqual



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