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Examiners' Report

Principal Examiner Feedback

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This is a new paper and has kept on board the respected centres and their candidates who sat the old specification. The aim of the new paper is to be accessible to candidates of both the Shi'ah and Sunni faith traditions. The new paper enables this to occur through the various sections, questions and awarding of marks in relation to these.

The paper attracts candidates from a wide range of countries, and they demonstrate the full range of ability. There are many candidates who score high marks across all sections of the paper, demonstrating a detailed knowledge and understanding of Islam. On the other hand, there are some candidates who appear less well-equipped to deal with the full demands of the paper. In some cases, they may demonstrate a good level of learned knowledge, but then fail to analyse Muslim beliefs, often stating the beliefs quite effectively, but failing to go on to explain or evaluate them.

SECTION A – The life, teachings and achievements of the Prophet Muhammad

(pbuh). There are two questions in this section. Candidates must pick one question and answer all parts of this question.

Question 1

- a) This was well answered by most candidates. Opposition was highlighted through a number of actions such as 'the boycott'.
- b) Overall a well answered question. The b) question is set as a 3-mark answer. To gain top marks students must give two correct descriptive points with an added element of understanding for full marks. For example: Umar was a great warrior whose reputation gave the early Islamic community confidence to worship publicly. This is descriptive in showing how Umar's reputation gave the community confidence and is gains an added element of understanding in making the link to worshipping publicly.
- c) A number of candidates used this question to write everything they knew about the 'Night of Power', without referring to how it was significant for the beginning of Islam. This meant a number of marks were dropped because of this. Those that did make the connection answered the question well and attained higher marks.
- d) The d) question is seeking students to do the following to gain top level. Firstly, read and understand what the question is asking. Secondly, link the text to the question in their answer. Thirdly, show the ability to include another point of view in their answer to show good evaluation skills. This question did not often see candidates bring in another point of view. Many candidates made good links between the text and the question. Some candidates answered the question without referring to the text and so dropped marks. Well answered by students

who understood the question and wrote in a way that evaluated what the question was asking and linking this to the text.

Question 2

- a) Answered accurately by most students identifying two ways the Prophet was recognised as the 'Seal of the Prophets.'
- b) Students demonstrated a good knowledge of the Battle of Badr and how this helped spread the message of Islam. Full marks on this question was frequently attained.
- c) A number of students dropped marks by being too descriptive in answering this question so answering the question from an A01 perspective only. The c) is designed to encourage students to give further development in their answer through A02 skills. Students who did this by understanding what the Prophet's teaching of justice and equality were and then further developed this by linking this how this helped establish a peaceful Islamic demonstrated good knowledge and understanding and so were able to access higher levels.
- d) Students who understood the question and linked it to the text in answering the question fully, attained higher levels and marks. Another point of view in candidates' answers was not often seen in this question. As the paper moves forward centres will be more prepared in teaching candidates how the answer these types of questions well.

SECTION B – The key beliefs, practices and features of the early Muslim community founded by the Prophet. There are two questions in this section. Candidates must pick one question and answer all parts of this question.

Question 3

- a) This was well answered by candidates showing good knowledge and identifying two examples correctly
- b) A number of candidates dropped marks on this question by mixing up Al Qadr (predestination) with Al-Qadr (Night of Power). Candidates that did not mix them up answered the question well.
- c) This was a well answered question. Candidates all demonstrated good knowledge in answering the question. Candidates who answered the question particularly well identified particular roles to individual angels and linked this directly to their importance for Muslims.
- d) Candidates dropped marks by not understanding the question fully. Some candidates just focused on why Shariah law was important and so did not get to grips with the question in how it could be important in uniting the Ummah.

However, candidates that made this connection and linked this to the text were able to access higher levels. Another point of view was not often seen in this question.

Question 4

- a) Well answered by candidates with many correctly identifying two occasions Jibrail revealed Allah's message to prophets.
- b) This was a well answered b) question. Candidates demonstrated good knowledge in their understanding of the Tawrat.
- c) This was a well answered question in relation to candidates understanding of the central place prophets have in Islam. Higher levels were accessed by candidates who linked specific prophets to particular beliefs in the Islamic tradition. Also, the central theme of spreading the message of Allah to His people was regularly referred to in gaining candidates marks.
- d) Some answers focused on what Tawhid was and did not derive from this position. This meant they did not get to grips with the question. Others focused on the question well but did not relate it to the text in anyway. Higher levels were attained by candidates who answered question directly linked to the question. Another point of view linked to other characteristics of Allah showed high evaluation skills from some candidates, but this was not often.

SECTION C – Living the Muslim life today. There are two questions in this section. All parts of both questions must be answered by all candidates.

Question 5

- a) This was a well answered question with students rarely not attaining the 1 mark available.
- b) This was well answered with students easily identifying some features of an Islamic marriage and most accessing at least 2 marks out of the 3 available.
- c) This was overall a well answered question with candidates gaining at least the 3 marks available for A01 skill by giving a good descriptive understanding of why Hajj is important. A number of students developed this further through AO2 skills but identifying the importance of the context of Hajj in deepening the relationship of the pilgrim with Allah and the unifying nature of Hajj.
- d) This was a well answered d) question overall with many students finding an alternative point of view easily. Higher levels awarded, as is the case with all d) questions, with an answer closely linked to the text. Weaker candidates repeated the content of the text without any evaluation or relation to the question.

Question 6

- a) Very few candidates did not gain the mark available on this question.
- b) This was well answered by most students. Marks dropped by candidates who mixed up the Greater Jihad and the Lesser Jihad.
- c) This was a well answered question in candidates identifying the importance of paying Zakat as a way for helping those in need, with higher level candidates linking this idea further to the fair distribution of wealth and promotion of a just inclusive society for all.
- d) This was a well answered question by candidates who followed the required evaluation and assessment, using A02 and A03 skills, in relating the text directly to the question. It was also a question where a number of candidates were able to identify another point of view. Weaker candidates repeated text without much evaluation

Advice on how to improve performance

- In b) questions make sure one point made, with a minimum of two, has an added element of understanding to gain full marks
- In c) questions make sure candidates read the question fully in order to understand exactly what the demands of the question fully.
- In c) questions remind candidates that in order to gain higher levels they must demonstrate, using A02 skills, understanding of the key concepts the question is relating to.
- In d) questions candidates must firstly read the question to understand what it is asking. Candidates then must carefully read the text and start to make links between the text and what the question is asking. This should then be the forming of a good answer aimed at higher level attainment.
- In d) questions candidates should always look to add a different point of view into their answer in order to attain higher levels.

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