



# Examiner's Report Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2018

Pearson Edexcel International GCSE  
In Islamiyat (4IS0) Paper 01



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## IGCSE ISLAMIC YAT (41SO)

### PRINCIPAL EXAMINER'S REPORT ON THE 2018 EXAMINATION.

#### INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS

There was a small increase in the number of candidates sitting for this final examination of the current specification. Although few of the candidates appeared to come from the Shi'ah tradition, both Shi'ah and Sunni candidates have always been able to answer two questions either from Section 3a or 3b, provided both answers are from the same section.

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 1 The Qur'an and Hadith

Translation of the various texts was generally accurate, although occasionally the translations were incomplete or they were translations of other passages. When only one or two marks are available, translations often have to be judged simply right or wrong, so it is important for candidates to translate accurately or at least paraphrase fully.

The ensuing single mark questions allowed the range of candidates to build up their marks. The one principal weakness was the tendency to be over general. For example, when candidates were asked why Muslims should avoid telling lies, it is not sufficient to respond by saying that it displeases Allah, or that liars will be punished, because this kind of response could be used to answer many different questions. Rather candidates needed to answer in a way that responded to the specific point of the question, perhaps in this example by saying that lying breaks down trust between members of the ummah.

#### Section 2 The Life, Teaching and Achievements of the Prophet

There were many good answers to questions in this section. It is clear, though, that some aspects of the specification needed to be looked at in more detail by some centres. Question 4a) and 6a) about the conquest of Makkah and the final Hajj of the Prophet, were answered well, with many candidates very familiar with the details. However, far fewer candidates knew enough about the early relationship between the Prophet and Abu Talib and particularly Bahira.

Perhaps the key area of weakness, for some candidates, was in respect of the part c) questions. There was a tendency among some to repeat ideas already expressed in a) and b) rather than enter into a discussion about them, or relate them to modern life. A good example would be 5c) which asked candidates to discuss how the example of the Prophet could be used to face challenges of life today. Less able candidates tended just to repeat the teachings and actions of the Prophet, without discussing why following those teachings could be particularly important in the modern world.

It would be helpful to comment briefly on each of the questions in this section in turn.

#### Question 4

4a) Good answers focussed on the details of the battle that led to the conquest. Many candidates knew these details well. Some, however, could not distinguish between different battles, and some seemed to misread the question, and wrote about other events relating to Makkah, such as the Hijrah.

4b) There were some good answers to both parts of this question. One key element of the question was to relate the qualities shown by the Prophet to the events surrounding the conquest of Makkah, such as the forgiveness and compassion shown to captives. Weaker answers addressed the Prophet's faith and character more generally, or only in vague terms without any specific reference to this particular battle and its aftermath.

4c) This question was answered quite well, with candidates showing a good awareness of the conflict that can occur within families and the local community. They drew lessons from the teaching of the Qur'an and from the example of the Prophet to suggest remedies.

#### Question 5

5a) Those candidates who were able to correctly identify Abu Talib and Bahira were also able to describe the relationship during the early years of the life of the Prophet (such as Abu Talib's role as Guardian to the Prophet and Bahira's vision). Those who lost marks did so either because they could not identify them, or wrote generally, without referring to any specific aspects of the relationship.

5b) Many candidates found this more difficult to answer, often being unable to suggest ways in which the Prophet's later mission benefitted from the support and encouragement of these two men. However, the stronger candidates were able to explain, for example, how the moral influences of his early life helped the Prophet grown into a courageous and merciful leader.

5c) On the whole this question was well done by many candidates, who clearly drew lessons from the teaching and example of the Prophet for their own lives,

and for the lives of Muslims around the world, such as the value of honesty, and of endurance in the face of persecution.

#### Question 6

6a) Many candidates knew the details of the final Hajj of the Prophet and scored highly on this question.

6b) Some candidates were clearly familiar with the content of the Prophet's final sermon and were able to mention his emphasis on the equality of all Muslims, regardless of race or background, and the importance of the family. Other candidates were not so familiar with the Prophet's actual words and could only speak generally.

6c) This question was well-answered overall, with many candidates able to explain the central importance to Muslims of belief in the oneness of Allah, and how worship of Allah helps Muslims to live faithful lives and avoid temptation and sin. Again, the ability to make specific reference to the final sermon helped some candidates gain more marks.

#### Section 3a (Sunni perspective)

The vast majority of candidates tackled this part of Section 3, though its worth repeating that any student were able choose to answer from either Section 3a or section 3b, provided they did not answer one from each section.

#### Question 7

7a) This question was well-answered. Most candidates knew the distinction between 'halal' and 'haram' and were able to identify correct examples of permitted and forbidden foods.

7b) This question was also well-answered, and many candidates were able to go beyond writing about the health issues to refer to the value of obedience to the will of Allah, of the value of self-discipline, and also the way in which shared practice can strengthen the ummah.

7c) Some candidates found this question more challenging, and spoke simply about the lack of trustworthy sources of halal food in some non-Muslim countries (sometimes with specific examples). Such answers gained some marks of course, but it was good to see candidates who were able to address the spiritual implications of this challenge, and explain how responding to it could be both a source of unity among Muslims and of strengthened commitment to Allah.

## Question 8

8a) Although this question was one of the less popular questions, candidates who chose it were able to provide a good level of detail about the relationship between the Prophet and Aisha and scored well.

8b) Answers to this question tended to be descriptive rather than explanatory, saying how the Prophet's wives were expected to behave. They did not always address the key question of why their particular example was important, and how they were seen as role models in terms of their modesty and fidelity to the teaching of the Qur'an.

8c) Candidates were aware of the value of family life, particularly within Islam, and the challenges it faces in the modern world. References to the distractions of new technology and the temptations of modern society were well expressed, and the value of family unity and faithfulness to Allah well explained. This was a well-answered question overall.

## Question 9

9a) There were many excellent answers to this question. It was good to read answers that showed an understanding of zakat in terms of the purification of wealth and of economic fairness, as well as an act of charity.

9b) Similarly, many candidates were able to address both sides of this question, not only understanding the more obvious benefits for those who receive zakat, in terms of the improved quality of their lives, but also how there are many ways in which the giver receives blessings and how it strengthens their commitment to their faith.

9c) This question was clearly more of a challenge. Many answers simply repeated the explanations offered in part b). For full marks it was important for candidates to address the specific issue of obligation. Some certainly did, and were often able to see the merits of both sides of the argument, understanding that the giving of zakat is a command, but that there is also the spiritual benefit of acting freely with good intention. The very best candidates were even able to explain how these two ideas are not necessarily mutually exclusive.

## Section 3b (Shi'ah perspective)

Very few candidates attempted these questions, but those who did so often answered well and showed a good understanding of the issues raised by the topics. Candidates usually answered questions 10 and 12 (which mirrored question 7 in Section 3a, comments above).

## Question 10

10a) The few candidates who answered this question usually did so well, having a good knowledge of the Twelve Imams and of their qualities, specifically their incorruptibility and their infallible interpretation of Shari'ah.

10b) There was also a good understanding of the Shi'ah responsibility to obey the teachings of the Twelve Imams, stressing in particular the Shi'ah belief that they are appointed and guided by Allah, and that their teachings can help to establish peace.

10c) Like all the evaluation questions, this was more of a challenge. However, there were candidates who were able to compare the notion of Imam with that of Khalifah, and others who considered the problem of the geographical dispersion of Shi'ahs. Overall, though, the discussion of this topic was simple and undeveloped.

### Advice on how to improve performance

This report has tried to provide specific guidance on all but a few of the questions that were answered by candidates. From those observations it is possible to draw out some items of general observations:

- In the translations in Section 1, full marks were only available if the translation were accurate and near complete, although accurate paraphrases were accepted.
- It was also important in Section 1 that the answers were specific to the question, and did not resort to recurring general ideas such as the value of obedience and the avoidance of punishment.
- In sections 2 and 3 the a) questions required the candidate to display detailed knowledge of events or teachings in order to gain full marks. On the whole it was better to avoid lists with brief phrases, as sometimes they lacked sufficient detail to gain full marks.
- The section 2 and 3 b) questions the key challenge was to provide development of answers, rather than simple reasons expressed in single sentences.
- c) questions in Sections 2 and 3 usually required candidates either to consider issues from more than one point of view, or relate teachings to issues faced in the modern world.

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