

## **EXAMINER TIPS for O Level Islamiyat 2058**

These tips are to help you when revising and highlight some of the common mistakes made by students in their exam papers.

### **General advice**

Preparing to get a good grade begins as soon as you start your course. You can prepare by:

- finding out what you need to know.
- keeping your notes organised so you always know where to find information you have studied
- knowing how your exam papers are structured and practising past questions.

### **Your notes and preparing for the exam**

Download a copy of the Revision Checklist from Cambridge Students and read through it. Be really clear what topics you need to know then check that your notes are complete and make sense. If you need further advice, speak to your teacher who will have a full copy of the Syllabus.

Try to produce an accurate set of notes when you do the work in the first place, but if you need to improve your notes you could:

- ask a friend if you can copy up work which you have missed from them – but make sure you understand it,
- find more information on topics you have studied, using your textbook, the library or the Internet. For it to be useful make sure that you fully understand it – if not ask your teacher,
- buy a good revision guide if you can find one in a bookshop.

### **Answering the questions in the examination**

- Read the instructions on the cover of the exam paper carefully so you know what you need to do and how many questions you need to answer.
- Make sure you use your time carefully. Each paper now is of equal length. You should practise the amount of time it takes to answer each question, taking in account the number of marks available. In question 1 there are only 8marks available, so you shouldn't need to spend as much time on this question as the other, which are worth 14 marks. However, this does mean that you will have to know the question 1 topic very well to allow you to write an accurate and concise answer.
- Read the questions carefully. This is very important as many students know a topic but lose marks because they have not read the question carefully and so have answered it incorrectly. When you answer questions on the paper think very carefully about what is being asked. Try to learn how to respond to command words like *Identify*, *Outline*, *Describe*, and *Explain*. It is important that you answer the question and do not fall into the trap of just writing down everything you know.
- Answer the questions in order of how confident you are – leave the one you are not confident about until last.
- Do not repeat the same answer in different sections. Examiners do not set questions which require identical answers, if you find you are repeating an answer check that you have read the question properly.
- Try to answer all the questions required for the paper, in other words, you should have answered four questions in total – two compulsory questions and two optional questions. Do not try to answer all five questions as it will mean you will take away valuable time that

you could spend on the other answers. Examiners do not credit you with more marks if you have answered all five questions and so it is only a waste of your time.

- Examiners are not testing your spelling, however you should try to make sure that you are using the correct word as the examiner cannot choose for you. So in a question about the Caliphs, if you say Abu Bakr instead of 'Umar, the examiner cannot assume that you meant to say 'Umar.
- Also, apart from the key words which you will learn in the Arabic as part of the syllabus, e.g. *zakat*, *musnad*, *qiyas*, keep all your language in English. Examiners do not always understand your mother tongue so will not know what you are trying to say if you use a term which is culturally significant for you.
- Make sure you know the meaning of all the words you are using.
- Try not to generalise too much. Although some questions may be asking you to 'outline' or 'trace' something, you should be as specific about the facts as possible. So in a question where you have to outline the main events in Ramadan, saying "The Qur'an should be recited frequently" is not enough to assume you know about the *tarawih* prayers which are done nightly.
- Try to understand the difference between part (a) questions which test your knowledge, and part (b) questions which are there to test how well you understand the knowledge you have learnt.

### **Understanding the difference between the different parts of questions**

#### **Part (a)**

Questions require you to write full but accurate details about the topic in the question. This does not mean that you should try to write all the information you have learnt on your course, but keep to the area which has been set in the question. So a question like "Describe the main events of the Prophet's migration," means that you should give the key facts related to what happened when he left Makka, what happened on his journey, and briefly what happened when he arrived in Madina. You should not give a detailed account of his life in Makka, the revelations and the persecutions, and likewise you should not give a detailed account of his first few years in Madina. Stick to the relevant facts.

#### **Part (b)**

Questions try to judge if you understand what you have learnt on your course. These are called evaluative questions because they try to get you to explain something, give reasons for something, or give your opinion on something. They are not worth as many marks as part (a) so the answers should generally be shorter but to the point. However, shorter does not mean vague or general. The answers should still be relevant, cover a few different points and not be repetitive.

If a question asks e.g. "Explain why this fast is important in Islam," answers such as "Fasting is of great importance to the Muslims" will not gain marks as there has been no attempt to suggest *why* it is important, e.g. because it gives self-control and discipline.

Use the glossary in the Revision Checklist to help you decide which command words are asking you to write about the facts and which ones are asking you to give reasons.