

ISLAMIC STUDIES

Paper 8053/12

Paper 1

General Comments

Most candidates appeared well prepared for the examination and there were a number of excellent scripts from a range of Centres. Many candidates demonstrated a sound knowledge of the subject. The overall standard of performance for this year's paper remains high. Every year candidates are reminded and encouraged to pay attention to examination techniques such as reading the questions carefully and developing answers as required. Unfortunately, several candidates scored low marks because they did not answer the question set. **Questions 1, 3, 7, 8 and 11** remained the most popular and were answered to a satisfactory standard. **Questions 4, 6 and 12** were less popular and less well answered. **Questions 2, 5 and 10** were the only three questions that presented candidates with a major challenge. **Question 9** did not attract many responses.

Comments on Specific Questions

Section A

Question 1

- (a) Overall, this question was not answered very well. There were some good answers to this part, but several candidates tended to make generalised statements. Some responses provided a few basic details without showing much knowledge.
- (b) This question was generally well answered, with many candidates demonstrating their familiarity with the beliefs and practices of the people of pre-Islamic Arabia and these were well described. Stronger candidates were able to mention the names and numbers of idols in the Ka'ba. Weaker candidates often lacked sound knowledge and tended towards generalised statements. Some candidates gave brief answers and there was some repetition of points from part (a).

Question 2

This question presented candidates with a challenge. There were many good answers but several candidates misread the question. These candidates did not show enough knowledge of precise historical events and described opposition to the Prophet (pbuh) and his followers in very general terms. Better answers explained the differences between the Qur'an and the beliefs of the Meccans, and detailed a number of major reasons behind the Meccans' opposition, such as economic elements in maintaining the status quo and traditional loyalties.

Question 3

- (a) Candidates were required to give a descriptive account of the capture of Mecca by the Muslim army led by the Prophet (pbuh). A high proportion of candidates wrote relevant, well balanced answers, giving a complete account of the event. Weaker responses lacked specific knowledge and gave incomplete details.
- (b) This part was generally well answered with the majority of candidates giving details of the Prophet's treatment of the Meccans and the specific lessons drawn from the event.

Section B

Question 4

This question was not a popular choice and the standard of responses was low overall. Several candidates lacked the specific knowledge required to address this question effectively. Very few candidates could discuss the role and status of messengers sent by God. Many candidates did not read the question carefully enough and concentrated only upon the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh). Their responses would have benefited greatly from focusing more on what the question was asking.

Question 5

This was the least popular question but was generally done well by those who attempted it.

- (a) Stronger candidates were able to outline the main theme of Surah al-Baqara, together with some quotations from the surah. Weaker candidates offered a generalised and unspecific account of the surah.
- (b) Better answers to this part gave a full account of the main elements in Surah al-Ikhlās. They also outlined the main teaching about tawhid in the Qur'an as a whole. Basic answers merely stated the importance of tawhid in Islam.

Question 6

The relatively small number of candidates who chose this question answered it well and attempted to show the centrality of the Qur'an in individual and communal life among the early Muslim community. The best answers explained the importance of the Qur'an, but also pointed to the example of the Prophet (pbuh). Some responses were either very brief or the explanation was confused.

Section C

Question 7

This question was quite popular and was done well by a large number of candidates.

- (a) Most candidates were able to provide a thorough description of the five daily prayers, their times, the preparations and the way of performing them. Some responses focused only on the importance of prayers rather than on performing them.
- (b) Although many answers identified distinctive features of Friday communal prayer and explained how these give a sense of unity, some responses merely described the Friday prayer.

Question 8

This question was very popular. Many of the candidates who attempted it did well and there were some outstanding responses. The majority of the candidates possessed sound knowledge about the two festivals of Islam and their importance in Muslim life. They provided a range of evaluation statements and most were able to link these statements to the question. Overall, this question was very well answered with candidates providing detailed answers.

Question 9

'In this day and age, belief in a final Resurrection and Judgement can no longer be accepted. How might Muslims respond to this opinion?' This question did not attract many responses. Very few attempted it, perhaps due to the fact that this type of question was new to this paper.

Section D

Question 10

Responses to this question generally showed that the majority of candidates did not understand the question. Most candidates merely described the importance of the Qur'an. Better answers displayed a very sound knowledge and understanding of Islamic law and suggested that the Qur'an is and will be

fundamental, but also referred to the Sunnah, ijma and qiyas. They were able to discuss in detail the ways in which the Sunnah and other secondary sources have been used to expand the teaching of the Qur'an.

Question 11

This was the most popular question in this section and many of the candidates who attempted it did well. The majority of candidates were able to offer detailed accounts of the relationship between the Qur'an and Sunnah, providing examples to explain the importance of the Prophet's Sunnah in interpreting and supplementing the teaching of the Qur'an for legal purposes.

Question 12

This question was not a popular choice, but several candidates who answered it were knowledgeable on Islamic law and gave a detailed account of ijma and qiyas, providing examples to illustrate their answers. Some responses lacked full knowledge of the topic and were superficial, lacking supporting examples. Very few candidates could explain the relevance of these sources in the current situation.