

ISLAMIC STUDIES

Paper 9013/12
Paper 1

General comments

Candidates are reminded and encouraged to pay attention to examination techniques, such as reading questions carefully and developing answers as required. Unfortunately several candidates scored low marks because they did not answer the question set. However, most candidates appeared well prepared for the examination and there were a number of excellent scripts from a range of centres. Most candidates had sound knowledge of the subject. **Questions 1, 6, 7, 8 and 12** were the most popular and were well answered. **Questions 3, 4 and 11** were less popular and less well answered. **Questions 5, 9 and 10** did not attract many responses. Very few attempted **Question 2**.

Comments on specific questions

Section A

Question 1

- (a) This part of the 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. Best answers gave thorough factual details such as economic elements in maintaining the status quo and traditional loyalties and explained the ways in which pre-Islamic Arabian society worked. They were able to mention the names and numbers of idols in the Ka'ba. Some described a few beliefs and practices, but without giving details.
- (b) There were many good answers to this part question. The majority of candidates explained the main criticism of these beliefs and practices. They were able to differentiate between monotheism and polytheism referring to the Qur'an in light of the doctrine of tawhid and gave factual details about the cleansing of the Ka'ba. Some responses provided a few basic details without showing much knowledge. Some candidates gave brief answers and there was some repetition of points from part (a).

Question 2

Very few candidates attempted this question. The best answers gave comprehensive accounts about the role and status of the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh), together with some historical references and quotations from the Qur'an. Basic answers gave sketchy and incomplete factual details and tended towards generalised statements.

Question 3

This question was generally well answered by those who attempted it. They gave factual details about measures taken by various Caliphs. The majority of candidates focused on Caliph Abu Bakr and Caliph Umar. The best answers attempted to explain the importance of some of these measures such as the political, social, economic and religious. Some responses tended to write about the life of these Caliphs which was not what the question was asking.

Section B

Question 4

Several responses lacked the specific knowledge required to address this question effectively. Very few candidates could give a comprehensive account of the main differences in character between the Meccan surahs and Medina surahs of the Qur'an. Many candidates did not read the question carefully and concentrated only upon the importance of the Qur'an.

Question 5

Several candidates focused only on the concept of tawhid. Good answers described the importance of tawhid and risalah in Islam. The best responses to this question attempted to explain the teaching of the Qur'an referring to the particular surahs about the doctrine of tawhid and the role and status of messengers sent by God as a means of communicating with humankind.

Question 6

This was the most popular question in this section and many of the candidates who attempted it did well. This question was generally well answered, with many candidates demonstrating their familiarity with the events that prompted the caliphs to compile the Qur'an into book form. Many candidates were able to provide a detailed account of the steps taken to make a collection of the Qur'an under the caliph Abu Bakr and caliph 'Uthman, however some focused only on Abu Bakr. The best answers gave comprehensive accounts of the events leading to the collection process including references to the method used by Zaid ibn Tabit and the mushaf kept by Hafsa.

The most comprehensive answers attempted to show the centrality of the Qur'an in Muslim life and the need to have an agreed text. Basic answers provided a few details without showing much knowledge and tended toward generalised statements.

Section C

Question 7

This question was very popular. Many of the candidates who attempted it did well and there were some outstanding responses. The majority of candidates possessed sound knowledge about the Five Pillars of Islam and their importance in Muslim life. They provided a range of evaluative statements and most were able to link these statements to the question. Although many answers identified distinctive features of these Pillars and explained how these give a sense of unity, some responses merely described them without giving details.

Question 8

- (a) This question was reasonably well answered, with many candidates demonstrating their familiarity with the celebration of 'Id al-Adha as a Muslim festival. Several candidates were able to identify the main elements of the festival. Best answers gave a complete and accurate account of what happens in Mecca and in other parts of the world. Weak answers gave incomplete and sketchy outline.
- (b) The most thorough answers discussed the significance of the festival and its centrality in Islam and demonstrated the links between some of the main elements of Hajj and Prophet Ibrahim (AS). They attempted to explain that Muslims have to submit to the will of Allah completely and follow the footsteps of the Prophet Ibrahim (AS). Some responses did not go beyond a paraphrase of the wording of the question.

Question 9

- (a) This question was generally well answered by those who attempted it. Better answers gave detailed accounts of the teachings in the Qur'an about angels such as their character and their specific traits. They were able to identify the main angels and their roles. Some responses gave generalised and unspecific accounts, without showing much knowledge. Weaker candidates often lacked sound knowledge and tended towards giving generalised statements.

- (b) This part of the question was generally well answered. Best answers to this question explained the significance of angels in Islam and defended them as necessary to Muslim faith. However, some candidates gave brief answers and there were some repetition of points from part (a). Some responses were either very brief or the explanation was confused.

Section D

Question 10

Many 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 Muslim community. Better answers explained the importance of the Qur'an, but also pointed to the example of the Prophet (pbuh). The best answers to this question displayed a very sound knowledge and understanding of the Islamic law and suggested that the Qur'an is and will be fundamental, but also referred to the Prophet's 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. Some responses simply stated the importance of believing in the Qur'an. Most candidates merely described the importance of the Qur'an.

Question 11

- (a) There were many good answers to this question. Best answers presented full and comprehensive account of consensus (Ijma) and analogy (Qiyas) and how they are used.
- (b) Candidates explained about the circumstances in which these sources are required and their limitations as well as the qualification of the mujtahid and discussed how they can still be relevant in legal thinking, providing examples to illustrate their answers. Basic answers showed only an elementary understanding of the question.

Question 12

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.

ISLAMIC STUDIES

Paper 9013/13
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ISLAMIC STUDIES

Paper 9013/22
Paper 2

General comments

The paper this year drew a reasonable standard of responses which appeared slightly improved upon the previous year. Some topics showed evidence of better understanding. There were few weaker answers and more answers showed some degree of evaluation, which is to be welcomed.

The best responses were written in clear paragraphs with a line space in between paragraphs. These responses clearly addressed the specific question set rather than writing about the topic in general. This was shown, for example, by defining any words in the question within an introductory paragraph and setting out the line of argument the candidate was then going to take. Each paragraph was then clearly related to the specific question and backed up with evidence. The best responses concluded clearly at the end of their essays with an evaluation.

Less clear responses did not specifically address the question set. Some did not write in clear paragraphs, or wrote long paragraphs without separating them when they made a new point. These responses sometimes wrote about the topic in general and did not make any definition or explanation of the key words in the question.

Candidates whom were able to do more than summarise at the end of the essay, by adding their own point of view, or weighing up overall the strength of their points made at the end, were able to achieve a higher level of response for the maturity of thought they demonstrated.

Comments on specific questions

Section A

Question 1

Most candidates agreed with the statement and went on to describe the different weaknesses in the Umayyad caliphs, such as monarchy, pleasure-seeking, power hungry, questionable use of the Bait-ul-Mal treasury, amoral and un-Islamic practices. Some excellent responses referred to excessive Arabisation and negative treatment of non-Arabs by the Umayyads.

Very few managed to show some evaluation by showing that the 'Abbasids were too strong for them, having gained the support of all those who were displeased with the Umayyad rule, such as the Mawali, the Shi'i and the Kharijites. Mu'awiyah and his son Yazid got most of the brunt of the criticisms, although few candidates pointed out that Mu'awiyah was also a Sahaba of the Prophet (pbuh) and one of the scribes of the Qur'an, chosen specifically by Umar as governor of Syria. Yazid's arousal of the hatred of the Shi'i after the event at the Karbala was well explained by candidates.

Most candidates focused more on the weaknesses of the Umayyads than the strengths of the Abbasids. Alternative answers including more details on Abbasid strength or argued that events were the result of both and of unfortunate combination of circumstances for the Umayyads.

Question 2

This question was chosen by many candidates. The knowledge of students about Umar's piety was strong. The best candidates linked Umar's piety to his effectiveness. For example, Umar was humble, so he did not waste money on selfish desires; therefore he was more effective at spending money from the treasury wisely and for the good of people and their religious facilities.

The best answers also addressed the part of the question encouraging them to draw a comparison with the effectiveness of other Caliphs, such as 'Abd al-Malik. It was perfectly possible to argue that Umar was most pious but not most effective, if a candidate chose to do so. Few candidates defined the difference between the two concepts but those who did at the start of their essays, in an introductory paragraph, and referred back to this in the conclusion, provided good evaluations.

Question 3

Few candidates opted to answer this question. Most responses could explain why it was called the golden age in Islamic culture, with the introduction of translations from other languages, access to Greek philosophy, development of art and architecture and so on. The wider the range of religious and cultural achievements referred to; the more comprehensive the response.

To achieve evaluation candidates needed to discuss how far this period was a golden age. They could demonstrate this by deciding if certain areas demonstrated more impact than others, or discuss how far things changed from the Umayyad predecessors or, in the area of science, borrowed from ancient Greek translations. Certain aspects of philosophy and reasoning under the 'Abbasid period might be criticised by more orthodox Muslims and this is another angle that could be taken by candidates.

Section B

Question 4

This question was attempted by many candidates. Imams Abu Hanifah and al Shafi'i were the most popular choices. Most included accurate and relevant information in answer to the question. Good responses pointed out main differences, and better ones concluded by adding why they were different and how these differences developed.

Many candidates emphasised that the main difference was that Abu Hanifah permitted personal judgement, perhaps more so than some of the other Imams. The main focus of the question was to encourage evaluation between two Imams, and many candidates achieved this by addressing the question analytically: they wrote a paragraph about how the primary source of law was used by each Imam chosen; then moved on to the next source and method. Others chose to write half of their essay about the first Imam chosen and then the second half about the next. This was also an acceptable way of answering, but in this case it was important to make links between the two and not write descriptively in order to achieve higher marks.

Some candidates chose to challenge the question in their conclusions and decided that despite differences they identified, overall these were of little significance.

Question 5

Most candidates who attempted this question chose to write on Imam Bukhari. However, many wrote more on his autobiography than on his methodology. Other candidates wrote about the methods used by the collector, such as making sure that the Hadith can be traced back to the Prophet (pbuh) or that the narrators were people of good reputation, without referring to one specific collector. The best responses successfully combined both.

Good answers explained the precautions that Imam Bukhari took in regard to the Isnad and the Matn to ensure the authenticity of the Hadith he included in his Sahih. Part (b) was better answered than part (a). Candidates could reason that had the collection not been made at that time, we might not have access to the Hadith of the Prophet (pbuh) today. Basic answers explained the importance of Hadith in matters which are not dealt in detail in the Qur'an. The best responses set the collections in context of the time when there were many false Hadith used to support one sect or group and therefore there was a need to sift the authentic Hadith from the fabricated.

Question 6

It was pleasing to see many very strong answers to this question. Candidates carefully included the main beliefs of Mu'tazilah and the response of al-Ash'ari for those points. This shows an improvement on previous years. It was clear from many answers that candidates understood the issues well.

Some candidates answered by mentioning all five doctrines of the Mu'tazilah together and then they wrote all the counter-arguments of al-Ash'ari. Others covered them in parallel, by mentioning one of the doctrines of Mu'tazilah and putting the refutation right after it, before moving to the next. Both ways of answering were valid but candidates who opted for the second tended to more clearly demonstrate evaluation between the two opposing positions.

Section C

Question 7

This question was popular and mostly well answered. Candidates generally understood that they needed to compare the leadership system in both sects. They managed to bring out how Caliphs were perceived by Sunnis as normal human beings, with weaknesses and limitations, and usually bound by consultation with advisors, whereas Shi'i imams were regarded as empowered to give interpretations free from error which their people were expected to adhere to.

Some candidates wrote about general differences between Sunni and Shi'i Muslims, the different ways of praying, the veneration of Ali, and the Mu'ta marriage in Shi'ism. However, the best responses specifically addressed leadership. Some candidates chose to make judgements about the validity of the approaches from their own faith viewpoint, but the focus of this question was an academic analysis of leadership in the two sects. The best responses focused on this and instead of making faith judgements, qualified remarks by adding riders such as a Sunni Muslim might believe, or Shi'i Muslim might consider, rather than denouncing one or the other as wrong.

Question 8

Candidates answered this question well in general and selected appropriate and detailed information to back up their opinion, whether they agreed or disagreed with the statement.

Very good responses explained how the spiritual sessions (Zikr sessions) in meeting places known as zawiyas or khanqahs heightened the spiritual awareness of Sufi worshippers and brought them into a deeper spiritual relationship with Allah. Others disagreed and explained how closeness to God could be attained by reading the Qur'an and Hadith and felt that Sufi sessions might lead a believer away from traditionally sanctioned methods of worship such as daily Salah, to acts of remembrance whose validity some might question.

One insightful response to the question concluded that if Sufis believe God is everywhere, then their practices do not bring a person closer to God: they bring realisation of that presence into greater focus in the mind of the worshipper.

Question 9

Candidates who attempted this question often approached it from a descriptive rather than analytical angle. Some debated whether the perception of pre-Islamic ancient Greek philosophy was frowned upon as a source of wisdom and whether this was the key factor in the downfall of philosophy amongst many Muslims. Some discussed how reasoning could be subject to the bias of human perception whereas revelation might be seen as a pure form of guidance uncorrupted by human reason. It was also possible to set this question on context and make the point that many Muslims at the time did not turn away completely from philosophy, and some notable works survive from this period to the present day.

Section D

Question 10

Only a couple of candidates responded to this question and give biographical details of one of the two scholars. Responses could be developed by focusing the teachings upon the needs of Muslims today and making direct links where either the teachings are helpful, or perhaps less relevant or even non-existent. A measure of evaluation could be achieved by evaluating which of the two might be seen as more relevant, or the question might be challenged by arguing that neither or both are of equal relevance.

Question 11

This was one of the most popular questions, yet many candidates did not address the focus of the question. Responses described the position of Christians and Jews in the Qur'an and according to Sunnah, but the focus of this question was about Muslims living in other societies.

The best responses engaged with the term 'blend in' and discussed how far that might compromise Islamic traditions such as wearing particular clothes, taking time off for festivals, or making space to pray during working hours. Some made the point that by blending in; Muslims could offer Dawah and show others more about what their faith entails, creating a good image of Muslims. Others questioned if blending in could lead Muslims away from the Shariah and into situations where they might be tempted to miss prayers or slowly lose their identity as they leave behind some of their traditions.

Question 12

This was a very popular question. However, many candidates described the teachings in the Qur'an about women in general terms without quotation and without differentiating between those that are found in the Qur'an and those from the Hadith traditions.

Better responses defined clearly what was taught in the Qur'an and what is added by the Hadith and from the Prophet's Sunnah. Some argued that the Qur'an contained the essence and the Hadith the detail. Others explained inheritance from the Qur'an and the development from the traditions and in Islamic law according to the four Imams. Some claimed that modern situations required new interpretations through consensus or analogy or even reinterpretation as the original sources did not give sufficient guidance for women who needed to know what to do with regards to careers, dress and interactions with others in a modern, multi-faith world.

ISLAMIC STUDIES

Paper 9013/23
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Only a couple of candidates responded to this question and give biographical details of one of the two scholars. Responses could be developed by focusing the teachings upon the needs of Muslims today and making direct links where either the teachings are helpful, or perhaps less relevant or even non-existent. A measure of evaluation could be achieved by evaluating which of the two might be seen as more relevant, or the question might be challenged by arguing that neither or both are of equal relevance.

Question 11

This was one of the most popular questions, yet many candidates did not address the focus of the question. Responses described the position of Christians and Jews in the Qur'an and according to Sunnah, but the focus of this question was about Muslims living in other societies.

The best responses engaged with the term 'blend in' and discussed how far that might compromise Islamic traditions such as wearing particular clothes, taking time off for festivals, or making space to pray during working hours. Some made the point that by blending in; Muslims could offer Dawah and show others more about what their faith entails, creating a good image of Muslims. Others questioned if blending in could lead Muslims away from the Shariah and into situations where they might be tempted to miss prayers or slowly lose their identity as they leave behind some of their traditions.

Question 12

This was a very popular question. However, many candidates described the teachings in the Qur'an about women in general terms without quotation and without differentiating between those that are found in the Qur'an and those from the Hadith traditions.

Better responses defined clearly what was taught in the Qur'an and what is added by the Hadith and from the Prophet's Sunnah. Some argued that the Qur'an contained the essence and the Hadith the detail. Others explained inheritance from the Qur'an and the development from the traditions and in Islamic law according to the four Imams. Some claimed that modern situations required new interpretations through consensus or analogy or even reinterpretation as the original sources did not give sufficient guidance for women who needed to know what to do with regards to careers, dress and interactions with others in a modern, multi-faith world.