

ISLAMIC STUDIES

Paper 9013/12

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.

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Paper 9013/21

Paper 2

General comments

The majority of candidates answered the correct number of questions, from the right sections. Most candidates appeared to have balanced their time proportionately so that they were able to ensure the same standard of answer across all five responses that they attempted. There were a small minority who attempted only some of the questions and it is possible that time management was an issue here.

Sections A and **D** appeared to be best answered. Typically **Section D** was the most popular, with many candidates choosing to answer two questions from this section. Candidates are developing their responses for **Section A** to contain more evaluative comment, which helped raise some of the marks awarded typically to a good level of response. This is also evolving in answers for **Sections B** and **C**, but candidates were on the whole slightly less confident with the subject matter in these sections.

Whilst candidates generally performed well in the middle levels of response, some still struggled to achieve the higher marks. Candidates should make clear and sharp definitions of terms in their introductory paragraphs. Candidates generally built up arguments through logically structured paragraphs, as their essays progressed, but could further enhance them by referring back to the terms of the question. The best answers had a clear point to each paragraph which contained an explanation about how it fitted in with the specific focus of the question. It is not sufficient to write about the topic in general; the specific focus of the quote, question wording needs to be addressed in responses.

Candidates are reminded that at this level a mastery of detailed examples and an ability to debate and discuss their significance is important. It is not necessary to learn quotations but some candidates did deploy them with skill to illustrate points made in their essays. Quotations should be used in that way: to provide an example to strengthen a point made to answer a specific question.

Credit is given where candidates make personal responses showing their own opinion, based on reasoned argument, in their conclusions. This is one area that could be further developed and candidates are encouraged to develop these skills further in their responses.

Specific questions

Section A

Question 1

This was a popular question and generally well answered. Candidates explained the importance of the military conquests in detail; the welfare state that was set up; the inclusiveness of others in political positions across the diverse and sprawling empire; and the personal style of government and succession that was established, to secure the future of the Umayyad Caliphate. A question of this nature invites candidates to define and evaluate as well as list and explain the main importance of Mu'awiyah. The best responses concluded their essays with some measure of evaluation: which aspect of Mu'awiyah's role was most significant for the history of the state and why? Any discussion of the character of Mu'awiyah was relevant only if couched in terms of the development of the state overall, which was perfectly possible but needed to be explicitly stated.

Question 2

The best responses defined a wide range of internal factors and explained them, including the bias towards Arabs which resulted in alienation of non-Arabs; the centralisation of rule; the resentment of the poor – especially non Arabs; resentment about the Jizya tax for non-Muslims by some; tribal feuding; shortages in the Umayyad treasury; the luxurious lifestyle of later Umayyad Caliphs. Another way of answering the question was by taking a chronological approach criticising each Caliph in turn, explaining how the Umayyad Caliphate declined step by step.

Question 3

This question required a specific focus on the reasons for the move east. The best answers referred to Al-Mansur's desire to draw on his support base amongst the Persian *mawali* as well as to retain their support. The complexity of the political structure of the Empire; the dynamics between central control and provincial autonomy, are areas that could be discussed here. The Golden Age of the 'Abbasids is a popular topic that candidates often refer to, but was not the main focus required by this question. It could be referred to in the context of the move in that Baghdad was a better base to draw on 'Abbasid support and facilitate the conditions most favourable for Golden Age developments.

Section B

Question 4

This question was reasonably well answered. The best responses added a measure of interpretation about how far the Schools of thought really were different in their concluding paragraphs. Some challenged the question and stated that although there were differences, they were relatively minor and outweighed by similarities. The best answers were also able to illustrate their answers with specific examples of different legal teachings between the Schools of thought, and how they had been arrived at due to the different methodologies of the founders.

Question 5

There were a few reasonable answers for this question but some candidates were not confident of the subject matter required for this question. Better answers were well versed in a comprehensive selection of methods of checking the authenticity of Hadith including checking both the chain of narrators as well as the subject matter of the tradition. The best responses exemplified these by referring to actual hadith collected and detailing how and why they had been checked by the early hadith collectors. Two or three detailed examples, quoting the hadith, narrators, the reliability of each with one or two examples of their characteristics; analysis of the subject matter of that hadith against the criteria of authenticity – all of this provided the evidence that a candidate had mastered the subject and in these cases scored well.

Question 6

Candidates clearly knew this topic well and had learned the main details about the teachings and doctrine of the Mu'tazilah. Some candidates gave a broad overview of all their teachings, but better responses angled everything towards an explanation of tawhid and how this could be drawn out of as a guiding principle of every doctrine of the Mu'tazilah. Some good answers explained the significance by comparing the difference between the Mu'tazilah and mainstream thought at the time, specifically around this doctrine. As ever, candidates who focused on the terms of the question performed well, for instance in writing about Al-'Adl, some began with the main points about what it is, outlined an example, and then explained how this underlines a rational world view. There are of course many different and equally acceptable ways of answering this question, but it should be emphasised that candidates must concentrate on the specific angle assessed here rather than writing about the topic in general.

Section C

Question 7

Candidates have noticeably improved their understanding of this topic in recent years and most gave good answers to this question, which proved the most popular in this section. Candidates were strongest in explaining the spiritual significance of the Shi'i Imams. The very best responses smoothly combined historical biographies of the early Shi'i Imams with the significance in worship today. Some definition of spiritual importance was a feature in the strongest answers. Note that this question focuses on the historical Shi'i Imams and answers excluding them and concentrating only on modern Shi'i Imams needed further development. There were fewer misconceptions about sectarian differences which had appeared in answers in previous years but which were rare in this year's responses.

Question 8

This question was generally well answered. A range of points were identified and elaborated upon. Candidates were free to define their own frame of reference from which to draw examples but the best responses did name and give examples from Islamic history from the period they had chosen. Good responses referred to criticism of Sufi practices as innovations or *bid'ah*, from an orthodox perspective. Discussion of the role of Sufi masters and vows of obedience were made. Some challenged the assumption behind the question and stated that in the most part there was no significant difference in doctrine; others concluded that the sum total of criticisms amounted to a major division.

Question 9

Few candidates chose this question but those who did gave reasonable responses. Some of the best answers started by defining what they thought a spiritual work should be, giving main features in general terms. More basic answers agreed with the quotation then gave a factual answer detailing the candidate's knowledge of the work. These answers needed to be developed with more discussion and evaluation about how spiritual it was.

Section D

Question 10

Not very many candidates answered this question and those who did addressed it in two parts. The best answers addressed the effects of the teachings on the respective countries, not just the details of the teaching. Candidates who achieved the higher marks reduced the amount they wrote about the teachings themselves so that they could then dedicate more space to writing about the effect of the policies on Egypt and Pakistan.

Question 11

This was a popular question. Well prepared candidates had good knowledge of specific Qur'anic teachings that they confidently referred to in their answers, which formed significantly better responses than more general references. The teachings of the Qur'an can be defined as both those thought necessary in the daily life of a Muslim for their own faith and practice, as well as those relating to interaction with those of other faiths. Good responses considered both approaches, using quotations from the Qur'an and explaining how they can be put into practice using everyday situations in a country the candidate was familiar with.

Question 12

This was a popular question, attracting many strong responses. Good answers began by defining the Qur'an's teachings about modesty in terms of both attire and the role of the Muslim woman. Better answers also defined what a full part in public life should be, and there were a variety of different ideas about that. Whilst some saw this question in simple terms and stated the teachings were no hindrance, others debated the pressures and practicalities of daily life, using examples from a country they knew well. Some responses looked at the Qur'an's teachings in general terms, sometimes confusing traditions from the Hadith or general teachings with those from the Qur'an. Better answers quoted examples of teachings and discussed how they could be interpreted in public life today.

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Paper 9013/22

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