

ISLAMIC RELIGION AND CULTURE

Paper 2056/01

Paper 1

General comments

The performance of candidates in this paper has improved year on year. The best responses showed good, detailed knowledge and understanding. There is evidence that some candidates needed to focus more on what was being asked in the questions.

Candidates need to differentiate between knowledge and the understanding of what they have learned. It is important that both part (a) and part (b) should be attempted. Candidates need to think for themselves when answering part (b) questions which often ask about choosing salient points and explaining their application e.g. Question 5 (b) and 12 (b) in this paper. Learning by rote should be discouraged.

Key Messages

Candidates are advised not to waste time in writing out the question before answering. Some unnecessary introductions were made before answers for part (a) were written. Correct numbering is important especially if (i) and (ii) are used in the question. Answers should not be written in note form. Enough time is allocated for each answer to be written comprehensively.

Answers should not be judgemental about other Muslims or other faiths. Statements about who is a 'kafir' or who will be sent to Hell are to be avoided.

Comments on specific questions

Section A

Question 1

- (a) This was a popular question. Good answers were able to focus on the life and activities of the people of Mecca in the pre-Islamic era. They mentioned the Quraish being the important tribe in charge of the Ka'aba, collecting taxes from pilgrims and being traders themselves travelling far and wide. They mentioned some of the ills prevalent in Meccan society such as the position of women and slaves. Weaker candidates filled many pages writing all they knew about the religious, political, social and economic life.
- (b) By and large this part of the question was well answered. Candidates knew the story of the rebuilding of the Ka'aba after floods had damaged it. The people of Mecca rebuilt it but then the problem arose as to who would place the black stone in position. They were able to explain the Prophet's diplomatic qualities in solving this which may otherwise have led to bloodshed. Weak candidates confused this with the Prophet's arrival at the Conquest of Mecca.

Question 2

- (a) It was important for candidates to know about the importance of either Fatima, the Prophet's daughter or Aisha, his wife during his lifetime. The weaker answers showed very little evidence of this.
- (i) Good answers mentioned Fatima was married to Ali ibn Abi Talib and was the mother of the Prophet's only surviving descendants.

- (ii) Aisha was the daughter of Abu Bakr and the youngest of the Prophet's wives. They also said she learned about Islam directly from the Prophet (pbuh) and that he died in her room.
- (b) There were some perceptive answers here from candidates who had learned about the Prophet's behaviour towards women and were able to suggest what they could learn and apply in their lives. Points were made about the Prophet's gentleness towards his wives, dividing his time equally between them, doing chores at home and above all following the teachings of Islam about the fact that men and women were equal in the eyes of Allah. Weak candidates only mentioned that the Prophet (pbuh) was kind and respectful towards his wives, but were unable to say anymore.

Question 3

- (a) This was a popular question and generally well answered.
- (i) Here candidates mentioned Abu Talib's love for his nephew, examples of the support and protection he gave him throughout his life. The Prophet (pbuh) reciprocated this by taking Ali into his home to ease the financial burden on his uncle.
- (ii) Many more candidates were able to recall the special relationship between the Prophet (pbuh) and his friend Abu Bakr saying he was the first adult man to become Muslim, the first to acknowledge the Night Journey, he accompanied the Prophet (pbuh) during the migration to Medina and gave his daughter Aisha in marriage to him.
- (b) This part of the question proved challenging for weaker candidates who thought the question to be about the amount of loyalty his followers showed to the Prophet (pbuh) rather than the opposite. Good answers came from those who read the question properly. They recalled the Prophet's personal qualities that inspired others to follow his teachings after the first revelation. These qualities were his care and concern for others, his patience, calmness, approachability, his ability to take advice from others (even women) and leading by example to name a few.

Question 4

- (a) Good answers here described the difficulties facing the Prophet (pbuh) and the Muslims in Mecca and how subsequent Pledges made at Aqabah came about. Mention was made of the Prophet (pbuh) preaching to strangers during the season of pilgrimage. Six pilgrims came from Yathrib, heard him speak, took the oath and became Muslim promising to change their lives. Twelve came the following year and 75 after that. They invited the Prophet (pbuh) to Yathrib and pledged to defend him.
- (b) Able candidates wrote about the Prophet (pbuh) in Mecca needing protection after the death of his uncle Abu Talib. With his uncle's death, his bonds with Mecca were loosened. The Prophet (pbuh) himself had been encouraging Muslims to leave Mecca and live where they could be at peace to practice Islam. The Pledges of Aqabah meant they could take refuge in Yathrib. On the other hand the pilgrims from Yathrib had heard about the Prophet (pbuh) as a pious person. They wanted to find someone who would sort out their never-ending tribal conflicts. When they heard what the Prophet (pbuh) had to say they became Muslim and felt he was the person they were looking for. Weak candidates wrote about the life of the Prophet (pbuh) in Medina and his achievements there.

Question 5

- (a) This was a popular question and generally answered well. A description of the main teachings of the Prophet's farewell address was asked for. Good answers included most of the essential points such as Allah being the One to be worshipped, reminding Muslims about the Pillars of Islam, how to behave with each other, the good treatment of women and so on. Weak answers were from candidates who wrote about the Pillars of faith and little else.
- (b) Able candidates logically identified a teaching from the farewell address and followed it by an explanation of how it might be applied in Muslim life. Concepts chosen were those of equality, sanctity of human life and brotherhood. Weak answers were from those who wrote on the five Pillars of Islam as five separate teachings and little else.

Question 6

- (a) Most of the achievements of Uthman were covered by candidates who were familiar with his life. Good answers mentioned the formation of a naval fleet and territorial expansion during his Caliphate giving names of conquered areas from North Africa to Asia Minor. These vast territories were administered efficiently. There was peace and stability. Uthman enlarged the mosques in Mecca and Medina, built roads and dug wells. Other candidates thought Uthman's only achievement was how the text of the Qur'an was standardised and old copies destroyed. Some confused Uthman with Umar.
- (b) Only the best answers were able to pick up on the positive aspects of what Ali was trying to achieve. He was considered as the best person to be Caliph at the chaotic time of Uthman's assassination. Ali wanted to establish law and order in Medina before trying to catch those guilty of Uthman's death. Others felt this was weakness on his part and began opposing him which eventually led to the split within the Muslims. With the expansion of the Caliphate and the taxes that were levied there was increasing wealth in the Treasury. Having seen the Muslims from earliest times and because of all the knowledge he possessed, Ali wanted Muslims to return to the simplicity of the early years of Islam. Weak answers suggested Ali was elected by the assassins of Uthman and described the battles that were fought during those years.

Section B

Question 7

- (a) This question was answered well by most candidates beginning with Muhammad (pbuh) going to meditate in Hira particularly during the month of Ramadan, Jibril appearing to him and eventually the mention of what Waraqah bin Nawfal said to Khadijah. Weak answers confused the narrative suggesting that both Jibril and Waraqah had said Muhammad (pbuh) was the 'last' prophet.
- (b) Candidates who did not carefully read what the question asked had difficulty in answering this. Some wrote about the importance of the content of the Qur'an which had been a question asked previously. Others wrote about the benefits of 'reading' but nothing of the importance of 'understanding' what was read. Good answers meanwhile spoke of the Qur'an being Allah's words hence sacred speech which Muslims should learn and try to understand for themselves to strengthen their knowledge, their faith and what it means to be a Muslim.

Question 8

- (a) Many candidates did well in this part of the question explaining the teachings found in sura Zilzal in their own words. This is what was expected. Weak answers quoted the sura without any explanations. Some responses confused this with sura Al Qariah (101) although the obvious overlap in the teachings still enabled them to gain some credit.
- (b) On the whole candidates wrote they have to do good deeds and keep away from sins in order to be rewarded on the Last Day. These ideas were not developed any further with examples, which is what was expected. Good answers here suggested that belief in the Last Day is one of the Articles of Faith for Muslims reminding them of the life hereafter for which they have to prepare in this life. They wrote about the guidance in the Qur'an and in following the *sunnah* of the Prophet (pbuh). If Muslims lead virtuous lives Allah has promised them good in the life to come.

Question 9

- (a) The story of Prophet Adam is well known to most. This was a popular question and there were many good answers covering all the relevant details. Candidates are advised not to confuse the narrative in the Qur'an with the Biblical narrative. Common errors were that Eve was made from Adam's rib bone, that she had tempted Adam and also that they ate an 'apple'.
- (b) What Muslims can learn from the acts of disobedience found in this story proved challenging for weaker candidates. Good candidates wrote about Satan not bowing to Adam, Allah warning Adam that Satan might lead them astray, and setting limits which Adam and Eve overstepped. Each of these had consequences. Muslims must not forget the boundaries set by Allah. They need to pray for guidance and know the consequences of their actions, to ask Allah's forgiveness when they go wrong.

Question 10

- (a) This was also a popular question. Most candidates made a very good attempt in describing the celebration and enjoyment of the festival of Eid ul Fitr. Some answers omitted mentioning *sadaqat al Fitr* which needs to be given before the Eid prayer.
- (b) It was anticipated that candidates would identify both the common elements and the individual differences in the two Eids. Weak candidates were unable to develop their answers beyond explaining that Eid ul Fitr is celebrated at the end of Ramadan and Eid ul Adha is the day of sacrifice in memory of Prophet Ibrahim AS. Good answers reiterated those points adding that these Eids were also occasions of happiness and joy, of thanking Allah for his blessings, days of sharing, days of brotherhood and of prayer.

Question 11

- (a) There were many knowledgeable answers to this question covering all the rituals that are undertaken when a Muslim dies and were able to explain these in correct order beginning with the *ghusl* given to the person, the burial shroud and all the prayers said at the time of burial.
- (b) There were some interesting answers about the privacy of personal prayer and why it might be important. Generally candidates did not develop answers beyond an explanation that a Muslim might make personal requests to Allah to help cope with difficulties, ask for His forgiveness and the belief that Allah will listen and accept *dua*. In some answers there was confusion between *salat* and *dua*.

Question 12

- (a) This question was answered by few candidates. Weak answers were from candidates who did not understand either of these two Hadith. Those who did were able to express themselves quite well.
- (i) Here they wrote about a person's own judgement in whether something is permissible. If doubts come to their mind they should stay away from it.
- (ii) Good answers in this part spoke about many levels in the faith of a Muslim which include good actions, sharing and wanting the same for others as for him/herself.
- (b) Often candidates seem to find it difficult to write about their own thoughts on a subject. There were some good answers. Others just repeated what they had already written above without adding their personal opinions or giving examples.