

ISLAMIC STUDIES

Paper 8053/12
Paper 1

General comments

The overall standard of performance this year remained high. 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. 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, 4, 7, 8 and 12 remained the most popular, while **questions 3, 6 and 11** were less popular and less well answered. **Questions 2, 5 and 9** did not attract many responses. Very few attempted **Question 10**.

Comments on specific questions

Section A

Question 1

- (a) This question was generally well answered, with many candidates demonstrating their familiarity with the beliefs and practices of the people of pre-Islamic Arabia. The 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 of idols in the Ka'ba. Weaker candidates often lacked sound knowledge and tended towards giving generalised statements. Some described a few beliefs and practices but without giving details.
- (b) Overall this question was not answered very well. There were some good answers, but unfortunately several candidates tended toward generalised statements. 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

- (a) This was the least popular question this year. There were many good answers to this part, but unfortunately several candidates misread the question and described events in general terms.
- The best answers gave a detailed account of the problems in Medina, and the suitability of the Prophet (pbuh) as a leader to solve them.
- (b) This part was generally well answered with the majority of candidates giving details of the Prophet's treatment of the non-Muslims. A high proportion of candidates wrote relevant, well-balanced answers, giving a complete account of the Prophet's conduct. Weaker responses lacked specific details and gave incomplete details.

Question 3

This question did not attract many responses but was generally done well by those who attempted it. They gave factual details of the main events of his caliphate and the difficulties encountered by 'Uthman.

The best answers gave a detailed explanation of the causes of unrest and also traced the events that resulted from this. Some responses tended to write about the life of 'Uthman which was not what the question was asking.

Section B

Question 4

- (a) This was the most popular question in this section and many of the candidates who attempted it did well.

Many candidates were able to provide a detailed account of the steps taken to make the collection of the Qur'an under the caliphs Abu Bakr and '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 Thabit and the mus'haf kept by Hafsa.

- (b) 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. 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. Some responses gave quite brief answers and there was some repetition of points from part (a).

Question 5

Good answers described the contents of the surah and pointed toward its theme of tawhid. The best responses to this question gave a full account of the main elements in the surah and attempted to link them to the main themes of the Qur'an as well as writing in detail about God's total knowledge and control. Basic answers simply gave an outline of the surah, with some only translating the surah and stating its importance in Muslim life.

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 Muslim community. The best answers explained the importance of the Qur'an, but also pointed to the example of the Prophet (pbuh). Better 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 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.

Section C

Question 7

This question was reasonably well answered although many responses did not go beyond a paraphrase of the wording of the question. The most thorough answers discussed the significance of the shahada and its centrality to aspects of Islamic thought and action. They attempted to explain that in order to become a Muslim, it is not sufficient to only pronounce the shahada, but that new Muslims have to submit to the will of Allah completely and follow the footsteps of the Prophet Muhammed (pbuh). Some responses were either very brief or the explanation was confused.

Question 8

This question was very popular and many of the candidates who attempted it did well, with some providing outstanding responses. The majority of the 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 the Pillars and explained how they give a sense of unity, some responses merely described them without giving details.

Question 9

This question was not a popular choice. Several candidates lacked the specific knowledge required to address this question effectively. Very few candidates could explain the significance in Muslim beliefs of scriptures revealed earlier than the Qur'an. The best answers to this question were able to name earlier revelations and explained their importance in Islam. Many candidates did not read the question carefully and concentrated only upon the importance of the Qur'an.

Section D

Question 10

Very few attempted this question and responses generally showed a lack of understanding. Most candidates merely described the importance of the Qur'an.

Question 11

This question was not a popular choice. Several candidates lacked the specific knowledge required to address this question effectively. Very few candidates could give a comprehensive account of *ijtihad*, together with one or more examples of its use in Islamic legal thinking in today's world.

Question 12

This was the most popular question in section D 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.