

ISLAMIC STUDIES

Paper 8053/12
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best answers gave comprehensive accounts about the role and status of the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh), together with some historical references and quotations from the Qur'an.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.