

ISLAMIC STUDIES

Paper 9013/12
Paper 1

General comments

A full range of responses were exhibited. Stronger responses started with clear introductions, defining any key terms. In these responses essays were written in paragraphs which included a clear, main point, explained in a couple of sentences then backed up with a couple of examples or evidence. Where questions referred to the possibility of different points of view; the best responses included different lines, evaluated them by stating why they were strong or weak perspectives and gave a personal view to agree or disagree.

Answers do not need large numbers of quotations but the best responses did include two or three, usually from the Qur'an and Hadith and sometimes from a scholar or book. Quotations of one to two lines long, where relevant, helped to illustrate answers.

Section A

Question 1

Candidates were well versed with the details of Pre-Islamic Arabia, and gave accounts of many of the aspects of life before the Prophet (pbuh) began his mission. General accounts described social and cultural aspects, the burial of daughters and the trade fairs. Focused answers recognised that the tribal and clan system was intended to be the main focus and explained the role of the Sheikh, loyalty to one's clan and tribe, and the inter-relatedness of this with the pilgrimage and trade fairs in which people bought and sold idols, contributing to the wealth of the Quraysh.

For part (b) some responses argued that the tribal system worked against Muhammad (pbuh). On the other hand, some candidates made the case that Muhammad (pbuh) received Abu Talib's protection and this helped his preaching since others were fearful to attack him because of the tribal protection Abu Talib offered.

Question 2

Most candidates wrote in great detail about the life of Muhammad (pbuh), whereas the strongest responses addressed the terms of the question to define stages. Commonly those who did manage to establish stages identified an initial period of peaceful preaching in Mecca, followed by stages of increased hostility of the Meccans, interspersed by the two groups of Muslims who claimed asylum in Abyssinia and the period of exile of the Prophet (pbuh) and his followers in the valley. The best answers identified stages in clear paragraphs and gave an outline of details in each paragraph.

The term 'success' was largely accepted by candidates, many of whom who argued that the Prophet (pbuh) was persistent and successful. The strongest responses questioned the meaning of the term 'success' which is often referred to in materialistic terms.

Question 3

Responses identified problems such as competing versions of the Qur'an, disunity between different groups of Muslims, the difficulties of maintaining the expanded Empire; the threat from external forces such as Persians and Romans (Byzantines), the controversy of 'Uthman's relatives who he appointed to positions of power to help enforce his authority and 'Uthman's character which some considered weak. Candidates generally understood the internal divisions within the Caliphate quite well. Weaker responses focused on the life of 'Uthman during the time of the Prophet (pbuh) before the start of his Caliphate.

Section B

Question 4

Stronger responses defined *tawhid* and *risalah* and gave quotations from the Qur'an to explain the meanings of these core beliefs. Weaker responses described the beliefs in general and did not specifically pick out references from the Qur'an about them. Many responses only briefly referred to the question of which was more fundamental, but this was in fact the focus of the question and should have been referred to throughout. Most candidates claimed that the two beliefs were intertwined; that the oneness of God pervaded everything but without prophetic messengers this could not have been established, so both were as important as each other.

Question 5

Weaker responses struggled to refer to the surahs set for special study. Stronger responses gave two or three quotations to help tell the story of Moses and Jesus. The strongest responses pinpointed what the surahs told and what details are not found in the Qur'an but have become accepted as part of the knowledge passed down to Muslims about the lives of these prophets.

The stronger responses explained specific references to aspects of Jesus' or Moses' lives which could be said to be similar to Prophet Muhammad's experiences. The strongest responses also challenged the premise of the question and argued every messenger had a message for their own time and no two could therefore be the same.

Question 6

The topic could be approached from many different angles, such as taking references from the Qur'an about the importance of revelation and accepting its message, as well as the instruction to observe 'signs' in the creation which support observation and rationalism. Most concluded that there was a place for both reason and revelation but that human reasoning could never overtake the revelation of the Qur'an but merely support it. Some approached this question from the point of view of arriving at *fiqh* rulings through reasoning and agreement of scholars; this was another acceptable angle to take.

Section C

Question 7

This was a very popular question with many strong responses. Most answers accurately identified three pillars and addressed how they helped to strengthen a sense of community, which was the required focus. Many chose prayer and explained how *Jamaat*, praying together in congregation, rich and poor, those of different ethnic backgrounds, all stood together in line as brothers. Some went on to explain the importance of *Jumah* and how the sermon and the social aspect of meeting others helped to strengthen community bonds.

Zakat was another popular choice. Good responses explained how *Zakat* helps redistribute wealth and give support to those in need, creating a bond of fellowship across communities. Others chose *Hajj* in which the worldwide community of Muslims is visibly connected in union by performing the pilgrimage rites together, all dressed in simple *Ihram* clothing.

Question 8

Many candidates who chose this question answered from a cultural perspective, and described social functions, wedding dresses, and traditional wedding foods, some even giving recipes for Biryani wedding rice. This was only partly relevant to the extent that Islam allows some cultural diversity according to local habit, although wedding traditions can be debated with some criticising lavish celebrations claiming they are excessive and non-Islamic in origin. Descriptions of the Nikah contract, the terms of dowry payment and any future arrangement for security in case of divorce; the importance of free will in the choice, the presence of witnesses, the role of a religious official and the importance of hospitality of guests in the party afterwards were all features which some candidates identified.

Part (b) gave candidates an opportunity to evaluate the Muslim and other cultural traditions which often merge in wedding celebrations, and offer a viewpoint as part of a good explanation. Some argued that the *du'a* and contract are distinctively Muslim and that the freedom of the woman to say no upheld a

fundamental woman's right introduced by the Prophet (pbuh). Others argued that often Muslim weddings, including henna, large week-long parties to which those of similar social standing attend; mirror the centuries long caste traditions of India and are not exclusively Islamic at all.

Question 9

For angels, responses identified roles in revelation, such as Jibril bringing the Qur'an; the role of angels actively helping prophets in their missions, not just as transmitters of the Qur'an, such as in helping the Muslims at Badr. Other roles identified were to watch over individual Muslims' daily actions and report on them at Judgement. Specific roles such as that of Mikael as Archangel and bringer of rain; and Israfil to blow the trumpet heralding the last days, were referred to in stronger responses.

The function of books to admonish each community which had strayed from monotheism and taken on immoral practices was well described. Some only referred to the Qur'an whereas stronger responses elaborated upon the earlier holy books and their importance to specific communities.

Section D

Question 10

Weaker responses described using the Qur'an together with the Sunnah and other sources of Shariah to provide answers for issues such as how to perform daily prayers. Stronger responses focused on issues relating to the lives of Muslims in the modern world, rather than general Shariah queries.

The strongest responses looked at modern situations such as how to address technology, genetic engineering, abortion and other medical issues which did not exist in the time of the Prophet (pbuh) and are not clearly guided by instructions in the Qur'an. A common line of argument was that the Qur'an included the skeleton of answers for all modern issues, but that the details often needed to be firmed up through logical deduction, reasoned agreement of scholars, or possibly through *ijtihad* (individual endeavour).

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The strongest responses focused on two or more examples and gave detailed quotations from the Qur'an and Hadith to back up claims made. Weaker responses only vaguely referred to the Qur'an and Hadith and struggled to explain the guidance they gave with any precision. Details about how to pray was a common example, with the Qur'an making general reference to standing and prostrating, and praying in the morning and the evening; whereas the Sunnah gives Muslims the exact pattern of a *rakat* prayer unit which remains unchanged today.

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Weaker responses were sometimes unclear on the concept. The focus of this question was to explain why some scholars frown on *ijtihad*, or even reject it. Some view it as verging on changing the fundamental, unchanging message of the Qur'an which they regard as in no need of further interpretation. Others accept *ijtihad* but do not necessarily welcome it; they see it as a last resort after exhausting all the traditional primary and secondary sources of Shariah. Some see *ijtihad* as perfectly legitimate and to be welcomed as a valid concept, supported in the Qur'an and Sunnah, and essential to find answers for today's problems. Some reference to this alternative point of view was another valid approach to the question.

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ISLAMIC STUDIES

Paper 9013/22
Paper 2

Key messages

Five answers should be attempted, one from each of the four sections and the last one from any section. Correct numbering of questions is welcomed. The length of the answer should be proportionate to the number of marks awarded for that question.

General comments

Candidates are advised to time their responses well as timing issues have led to whole questions being left out or answered partly.

Candidates should engage with the question rather than writing on the topic in a general manner.

Comments on specific questions

Section A

Question 1

The strongest responses defined 'state' to include a wide range of areas which came under Umayyad rule. Stronger answers explained the system changes including election versus dynasty, comparing them to Four Rightly-Guided Caliphs, with less consultation, using Bayt-ul Maal in wrong ways, moving the capital and indulging into non-Islamic activities. They further explained that decisions were made for practical reasons of ruling a large empire but were not so closely related to the Sunnah of the Prophet (pbuh). The best responses were able to explain the reasons for these changes, perhaps quoting a historian or scholarly opinion, and recognised that others could argue the Umayyad dynasty may not have changed all that much. Weaker responses focused on how the state was ruled during the four Rightly-guided Caliphs but not enough emphasis was put on the changes brought in the Umayyad rule and their causes.

Question 2

Some responses argued that the 'Golden Age' under the 'Abbasids was evidence that they were more 'Islamic', and that the Madhabs developed and flourished under 'Abbasid rule. Others questioned this and pointed out the Mihna, or Inquisition, occurred under the 'Abbasid Caliphate due to intolerance of the religious scholars.

Some responses focused on the characters of some of the Umayyads who were said to engage in immoral personal practices, drinking wine and so on. But it could also be argued there were many Umayyads who upheld the morality of the Sunnah, and the preferred example is Umar II. The strongest responses were able to explain the complexity of this period before coming to a supported conclusion.

Question 3

- (a) Many responses gave very lengthy accounts of the three caliphs' rule. This made it difficult to balance time for the rest of the paper. The strongest responses were able to summarise and condense the information they knew into roughly the same length of answer as that given for other 12 marks questions. A few responses were focused on only one caliph.

- (b) The 'office' meant the role of the caliph, which had developed into an official position and hence may be referred to as an 'office'. This was not understood in weaker responses. The strongest responses were able to define the role of the caliph then evaluate it as an important role in leading the state.

Section B

Question 4

The best answers here went beyond describing the life of Al-Shafi'i and described the methods he used in concluding fiqh rulings in his Madhab, which are thought influential because they are so comprehensive and referred to by other scholars regardless of Madhab. Some candidates challenged the question and argued all Schools were equally important, and this was a perfectly acceptable line to take.

Question 5

The stronger responses to this question referred to the methods used by the collectors, including details about the verification processes for both the chain of narrators and the subject matter of the text. Many responses included a few stories from the travels of Bukhari but struggled to fashion them into a comprehensive argument. Weaker responses were unable to state different methods for testing the subject, the matn, of a Hadith. The weakest responses did not include any methods but were a general overview of how Hadith literature developed.

Question 6

- (a) Some very detailed and excellent responses were given by some candidates.
- (b) Most candidates were able to explain al-Ash'ari beliefs and how these became mainstream. Fewer were able to set this amidst the context of the caliphate and political changes in that the Mu'tazilah fell out of favour, as did their emphasis on rationalism.

Section C

Question 7

- (a) Most candidates were able to describe the events at Karbala' in some detail. The strongest responses were those that could give a historical context to the event, for example why Husayn and his family were heading to Kufa, and described the battle which led to the massacre of imam Husayn with details. Weaker responses discussed the conflict between Ali and Muawiya in lots of detail, when it was not required.
- (b) The stronger responses were able to trace the spirituality of sorrow, suffering and injustice from the death of Husayn through to modern causes particularly for Shi'i Muslims. The political impact of Husayn's death and the rise of Shi'ism needed to be discussed to create the strongest responses.

Question 8

Few candidates chose this question and those who did sometimes did not refer to any names of Sufis. The strongest responses were able to refer to two Sufis and many different examples were credited. General answers referred to Sufism out of context but specific answers identified aspects of zikr in the practice of Sufis and contrasted them with mainstream Sunni Islam. Some challenged the question and argued that Sufism was perfectly compatible with other forms of Islam and not so different, which was another acceptable line of argument to follow.

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Few candidates chose this question. Some stronger responses opted for Al-Ghazali and contrasted his theological works which criticised philosophers such as Ibn Sina and Al-Farabi in his work 'The Incoherence of the Philosophers'. Ibn Rushd wrote a reply to Al-Ghazali; The Incoherence of the Incoherence. Candidates could have chosen two or three quotes from these texts to illustrate the differences between the two approaches.

Section D

Question 10

The strongest responses considered the approach towards western education and whether to accept and benefit from it or whether to reject modern western political systems and follow alternatives, such as political Islam. Stronger answers recognised a diversity of opinion within each approach.

Question 11

Candidates were much stronger on Christian beliefs and many argued that both religions were equally close to the Muslims. A good way to answer this question could have been a comparative study of how Christians and Jews view God and how this relates to Muslims.

Question 12

- (a) A very popular question, which was attempted by most candidates. Many responses made general reference to Islamic teachings about women with occasional reference to the Hadith. Many responses focused on the rights that Islam has given to women. The question here was specifically about Qur'anic teaching and was best answered by specific references to the Qur'an.
- (b) The best responses recognised the variety of approaches in different Muslim societies, with some following local cultural practices which could be said to some extent to be in accordance with the Qur'an and others questioned. The question did not specify whether the countries should be with Muslim majority or minority so a wide range of responses were acceptable as long as they referred to a specific country.

ISLAMIC STUDIES

Paper 9013/23
Paper 2

Key messages

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