

ISLAMIC STUDIES

Paper 9488/12
Paper 1

Key messages

This was the first examination of the new syllabus.

Most candidates performed well as they were familiar with many of the topics in this syllabus. Overall, a range of responses were seen.

Candidates could improve their performance in this paper by working on being more evaluative in their answers and considering different perspectives for **Questions 1(c), 2(b) and 3(b)**.

Candidates have a choice between **Question 2** and **Question 3**. Both **part (a)** and **part (b)** need to be attempted to score maximum marks

Candidates performed equally well on all questions.

General comments

- Candidates should ensure they are familiar with this new syllabus, including words in the syllabus for the topics covered, for which knowledge is expected. Any term in the syllabus might be used in a future question.
- Use the marks available as a guide for the length of answer: for 5-mark questions, these need to be kept very short and to the point, so that more time can be allocated to the 15-mark questions.
- Candidates should try to build up a discussion in their responses to **Questions 1(c), 2(b) and 3(b)** and can do so more effectively with a clear paragraph structure, such as by starting with a short introduction defining the issues and leading through to a conclusion at the end.

Comments on specific questions

Section A

Question 1

- (a) This question was well answered. The themes of being dutiful to parents and grateful to God was well elaborated on as well as the obligation to worship only God, even at the expense of disobeying parents. However, the theme from the last verse, which was about how this life is temporary and therefore it should be used to prepare for the next life was omitted in many responses.

The five-mark **part (a)** questions provide a starter for topic and do not require long responses. If clear, five points could be given in five lines, with just a few words for each.

This is a very easy question to score marks and candidates need to focus on the extract at hand and extrapolating the teachings in the verses and writing them in their own words, not paraphrasing or repeating words from the passage.

- (b) Candidates had to explain the hadith which lays emphasis on the necessity to give the best treatment to parents, especially the mother, in response to all the hard work that they have put in raising that child. Candidates did quite well in this question which was knowledge-based and wrote about the great importance of mothers in Islam, with good quotes from other hadith and verses from Qur'an. Some responses were limited to only obedience as good behaviour, when in fact it

could cover all the spheres of life, such as discussing with them, considering their opinions when taking a decision, visiting them, and buying their groceries when they are old, etc.

- (c) This was an evaluative question with the focus being on the word 'everything'. Good responses included a good discussion of how obedience to parents is essential but still conditional to some conditions, such as following traditions/cultures that lead to disobedience of God. Responses showed the importance of obeying parents, as mentioned in the Qur'an and explained by the Prophet (pbuh) in Hadith. The strongest responses were those that used verses from Qur'an, such as the one in **part (a)** to show different perspectives.

Weaker responses just repeated what had already been said in **part (b)**, with discussion of other points of view.

Question 2

- (a) This question was well answered. Responses included the spiritual reasons for fasting, as well as the physical reasons. While fasting, Muslims are obeying the commands of their Lord (Qur'an 2.183) and fulfilling one of the pillars of Islam. The primary purpose of fasting as mentioned in the Qur'an is to attain God consciousness (taqwa), Muslims also learn to exert restraint; the ability to control worldly desires, such as food, drink and marital relationship and thus spend time in prayer and meditation. Muslims develop a greater strength to face temptation in their everyday life and become closer to God. Good responses also mentioned how fasting enable Muslims to experience the suffering of the poor and make them more sympathetic towards them and increase their desire to help them by giving charity.
- (b) **'Ramadan has more benefits for the individual than for the community.'** Evaluate this statement.

Candidates had the choice of agreeing with the statement, disagreeing with the statement, but needed to give a balanced discussion of both points of view. Those who agreed explained about the spiritual benefits of fasting, how it increases the faith of a Muslim and draws them closer to God. Having learnt to control their instinctive impulse for self-gratification through abstaining from food, drink and marital relationship during that month makes it easier for Muslims to abide by the laws of God outside of Ramadan. Muslims also learn to seek God's pleasure alone and His forgiveness in the month of Ramadan, purifying them from the sins committed in the rest of the year, this in turn is beneficial for the person's hereafter. But candidates equally explained the communal benefits of Ramadan well, how it raises awareness of the plight of the poor and make Muslims more eager to help those deprived, thus leading to a more just society. Also, the sense of brotherhood is heightened when Muslims meet their brothers in the Mosque five times a day, but also for the night prayer.

Candidates could have improved their answers by including more quotes from Qur'an and Hadith.

Question 3

- (a) This question required candidates to discuss God's predestination (qadar) as an Islamic belief. Candidates explained that Muslims believe that everything that happens in this life has been predetermined by God, who has knowledge of everything. However, responses often did not put enough emphasis on the fact that despite God having the knowledge of what man will choose, man has a free-will, and are solely responsible for their actions and should therefore be rewarded accordingly. Therefore, Gods' justice is a result of man's free-will and predestination cannot be used to make man immune to blame.
- Candidates would improve their responses by using quotes from Qur'an and Hadith on this topic to make their answers stronger.
- (b) This question was not well answered because many candidates chose to agree with the statement without sufficient discussion of different viewpoints. They explained that being worried about what awaits them in the hereafter, makes Muslims lead a good moral life, and had this belief not been there Muslims would have lived their life as they wish.

Cambridge International Advanced Subsidiary Level
9488 Islamic Studies November 2021
Principal Examiner Report for Teachers

The strongest responses showed that belief in afterlife is not enough as a catalyst for leading a good life, other beliefs as well come into play, such as belief in God as the Lord who deserves alone to be worshipped and obeyed or belief in the prophets who brought guidance for humankind.

ISLAMIC STUDIES

Paper 9488/22
Paper 2

Key messages

This was the first examination of the new syllabus.

Some candidates performed well, and some found questions challenging and seemed unfamiliar the new topics. Overall, a range of responses were seen. All of the questions were answered by candidates, but overall **Question 2** and **Question 4** were the most popular. Candidates performed equally well on all questions.

General comments

- Candidates should ensure they are familiar with this new syllabus, including words in the syllabus for the topics covered, for which knowledge is expected. Any term in the syllabus might be used in a future question.
- Use the marks available as a guide for the length of their answer: for 5-mark questions, these need to be kept short and to the point, so that more time can be allocated to the 15-mark questions.
- Where questions allow a degree of choice, such as with reference to Islamic jurisprudence, candidates should name any perspective they are referring to so that their answer is clear.
- Candidates should try to build up a discussion in their responses and can do so more effectively with a clear paragraph structure, such as by starting with a short introduction defining the issues, leading through to a conclusion at the end.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

(a) **State five jobs which a Muslim might not do.** (5)

This question was well answered. Responses included work involving non-halal (approved) meat; work in a bar or involving alcohol; work with interest in a bank; work involving anything dishonest including giving the wrong impression, such as whilst selling something. Some candidates mentioned work involving free mixing of men and women, such as in a night club. Provided jobs involving disapproved activities or situations were identified, marks were credited.

Candidates are reminded to take account of the numbers of marks given for each question so they can apportion their time most effectively. Some responses included a lot more detail than is expected for a five-mark question. These responses needed to be more concise, writing around five lines, so that more time could be available to answer the higher mark questions. Likewise, it is important for candidates to take note of the command word 'state' in the question. For example: '*bar tender*' is sufficient, because it is clear that a Muslim might not wish to have anything to do with alcohol. It is not necessary to explain this further. Where a more general example was given, such as '*shop worker*', this was insufficient to gain a mark without further explanation. '*Shop worker selling haram (forbidden) things*' was sufficient. Some candidates wrote whole page answers for this question: this was unnecessary and may have taken time away from them which they could have used to further concentrate on their other answers.

(b) Describe guidance given in Islamic law (shariah) about employment for Muslims. (10)

This question was open for candidates to focus on guidance within Islamic law from what they had studied: as guided by the syllabus, candidates may focus on one school of thought or perspective, so could answer from that perspective only or from a range of schools of thought and perspectives. Either approach was equally valid and capable of gaining full marks.

There are many different aspects about employment, and different jobs; candidates did well where they made general points and backed these up by referring to relevant examples. The question was about Islamic law, not just Muslim attitudes to employment, so it was necessary to refer to sources of Islamic law in order to explain this: the best answers referred to teachings from the primary sources of Islamic law, the Qur'an and Sunnah, in order to explain how guidance was derived.

Many responses mentioned about avoiding forbidden activities or handling forbidden substances. Good responses covered not only what was forbidden but what was recommended, such as working honestly in trade and earning to support the family, in order to achieve rewards from God. This could be backed up by referring to the hard work done by the Prophet (pbuh) during the time when the community laboured to gain strength in Medina. Some answers considered guidance for employment for women, which added a different perspective, with reference to Khadijah and her example of being a successful businesswoman, as well as situations in employment which should be avoided, such as mixing between the sexes, according to some perspectives.

Weaker responses offered only limited descriptions that needed to be developed further, often with more detail to back them up.

(c) 'Analogy (qiyas) is the most useful source of Islamic jurisprudence (fiqh) for today.' Discuss this statement with reference to different points of view. (10)

This question required candidates to discuss qiyas. Good responses defined qiyas at the start of their answers, in an opening paragraph. Most candidates correctly identified qiyas as a secondary source of Islamic law, sometimes referred to as the fourth source. It is to find an answer to a new issue by making comparison to established rulings. This can only be used when the Qur'an and Sunnah have not already provided a clear answer and must conform to the principles contained therein.

The best responses focused on the key words from the question for discussion, which were about whether qiyas is the 'most' useful source 'for today'. This is not the same question as asking whether qiyas is useful in general. The best responses saw this and noted that there are many issues in the modern world which are different from the time when Muhammad (pbuh) lived, so require guidance. They went on to discuss whether this guidance could most usefully come from which sources of Islamic jurisprudence. The discussion then focused on those sources and their interdependence – how qiyas was dependent on finding similar situations and in agreement with the primary sources of guidance in the Qur'an and Sunnah.

Weaker responses did not always address this focus, but stronger responses maintained a discussion and concluded by making an overall judgement about the usefulness of qiyas today. It was possible to answer that it is or is not the most useful compared to others. It was also possible to agree (or disagree) only and to fulfil the requirement to discuss different points of view by discussing different ways in which a Muslim might agree (or disagree).

Question 2

(a) Identify five different occasions when a Muslim might perform purification (wudu). (5)

Candidates answered this question well. Occasions such as before reading the Qur'an, before prayer, after sleeping, after going to the toilet and so on. Credit was given for each prayer named. As with **Question 1(a)**, explanation was not necessary; **part (a)** here only requires candidates to identify the occasions, which may be successfully achieved in a few words. With five marks available, answers of five lines were sufficient to achieve full marks, provided they were relevant and answered the question. Longer answers which repeated information did not necessarily gain any more marks and took time away from candidates which they might have used to focus on their other answers.

- (b) **Explain when it is necessary to perform wudu according to one school of Islamic jurisprudence (fiqh).** (10)

The syllabus guides candidates to consider issues of Islamic jurisprudence from one school of thought or perspective, such as one of the Sunni schools: Hanafi, Shafi, Malaki or Hanbali. Most candidates answered from the point of view of one of these and the best answers stated clearly which perspective they were going to explain at the start of their answer. Weaker responses tended to make generalised answers about how a Muslim might perform wudu or gave general comments which might loosely be attributed to Muslims without identifying any particular school of thought.

The strongest responses clearly described conditions for wudu and referred to the school of thought in determining those conditions, especially where these came from the Sunnah of Muhammad (pbuh). This helped to show understanding of Islamic jurisprudence derived from the primary sources, Qur'an, and Sunnah. Some responses went further and described different categories of action in Islam and noted that in some circumstances it becomes necessary to perform wudu, such as after sleep or after going to the toilet. Other circumstances such as when a Muslim is in doubt about their state of wudu was also be discussed. It was only required to answer from one school or thought or perspective. One or two described some variations in conditions, such as the Shi'i Muslim requirement to perform a fresh wudu before each session of prayer, regardless or whether the previous wudu had been broken or not.

- (c) **'Differences regarding performing wudu are not important.' Discuss this statement with reference to different points of view.** (10)

Candidates generally performed less well on this part than the other parts of **Question 2**. The statement was about differences, meaning differences in the practice or conditions or any aspect of wudu. Those differences might be between two different Muslims, or between schools of thought, or between circumstances in which they are carried out, for example. Candidates defined differences such as between Shi'i and Sunni, with Shi'i Muslims required to perform wudu before each prayer session regardless of whether the previous wudu is broken or not, according to many Shi'i authorities. A difference in circumstances might be if water was or was not available: if not, a Muslim might perform dry ablution using sand.

The statement referred to the importance of this. Some argued this was not important, since if a Muslim genuinely believed they were preparing for prayer by performing ablutions in a way authorised by the school of thought they were following, then their intention was clear and they had done all they could to ensure they were doing the right thing, regardless as to whether another Muslim was doing something a little different. A different viewpoint that was given in some responses was that differences are important because they might lead to disunity and division amongst Muslims, so scholars should ensure these matters are discussed and resolved. Some pointed out that differences are really very small compared to other matters and made conclusions based on this.

Some weaker responses only gave one point of view in the answer, or gave a different point of view, but did not develop it sufficiently to give a balanced answer. Other weak responses were limited by the evidence that they gave to back up their point of view.

Question 3

- (a) **Explain the anthropomorphic references to God in the Qur'an.** (10)

This was a familiar topic, and candidates responded to this question well. Most candidates referred to the theology of al-Ashari, whose interpretation of these verses evolved in debate and argument with the Mu'tazilah. Good answers took the time to set the issue in context with the coming of Muhammad (pbuh) and the destruction of the idols.

Candidates might improve their answers by referring specifically to some of the terms used in the anthropomorphic verses, such as hand, face and throne, which may be found in verses of the Qur'an such as Qur'an 55:27; 39:67; 57:4. One excellent response drew together what they knew from these verses with knowledge of the Qur'an in general and the verse that suggests some verses within the Qur'an are literal and others allegorical or otherwise (Qur'an 3:7), and used this as a basis for explanation. Sometimes 'hand' is explained to mean works; the way God works in

the world; 'face' to mean presence nearby shown in what is in front; and throne a symbol of power and justice and sometimes interpreted to mean the whole world and universe, a symbol of the enormity of God. The strongest answers explained some of these terms.

(b) Discuss how Muslims might interpret the anthropomorphic verses of the Qur'an. (15)

The best responses here noticed the word 'might' in the question: so good awareness of how Muslims might interpret the verses included details about other interpretations. There was no requirement here for a candidate to agree with all interpretations, and they could add their own to the discussion, but better answers went beyond their own interpretation and demonstrated awareness of others. A good way to do this was to state the interpretation and then comment on it, and to disagree with it was perfectly acceptable, provided it was clearly stated so that the argument could be well explained and developed.

In practice, this meant recognising the Mu'tazilah perspective on these verses, stating it, then explaining why many Muslims discount or disagree with the Mu'tazilah interpretation. One response did this and went on to discuss how far the interpretation really was different and concluded that the differences were not as great as is sometimes made out, as the focus was still on the oneness of God, whatever way the verses were interpreted. One or two weaker responses showed a misunderstanding of the term 'anthropomorphic' and so wrote mostly about a different topic, which was not creditworthy.

Question 4

(a) Explain the importance of belief in the Mahdi for Shi'i Muslims. (10)

This was a popular question. Note that while there is some similarity between Sunni and Shi'i beliefs, there are also some specific points which needed to be made here about Shi'i beliefs, since the question was specifically about the beliefs for Shi'i Muslims. Many candidates knew something about Shi'i beliefs but could have included more details about the Mahdi in their answers.

Most candidates knew about the traditions relating to the appearance of the Mahdi towards the end of time and the coming of the Day of Resurrection and Judgement.

(b) To what extent are there significant differences between Shi'i and Sunni beliefs? Give reasons to support your answer. (15)

This question was reasonably well answered, and candidates could draw on a wide range of knowledge to support their answers. The best responses did so and considered many different areas of beliefs, including beliefs about the succession after Muhammad (pbuh); the position of Ali; the commemoration of Ashura in the month of Muharram; the beliefs about Hadiths; the position of the Imam; the beliefs about the practice of prayer and the Shahadah; the Shi'i ten compulsory acts and so on. There was no need to include all of these; the best responses first set out their argument and then used examples to illustrate this. Weaker responses used examples and added on one or two sentences of argument at the end of a paragraph.

Examples of strong responses included a developed conclusion, in which an overall judgement was made about how 'significant' any differences found are. Some argued there were differences, but these were not significant, because the main beliefs such as in the oneness of God, were the same. Others argued that the differences were very significant and shown by the different traditions. Finally, one or two argued that in some ways the differences were significant and in other ways not so. Candidates could take any of these positions or other positions, and achieve full marks, provided they supported their argument. The strongest responses did so and were clear in their summing up at the end.

ISLAMIC STUDIES

Paper 9488/32
Paper 3

Key messages

- This was the first examination of the new syllabus. Paper 3 was challenging for many candidates who were unfamiliar with some of the new topics.
- Nevertheless, a range of responses from weak to strong was observed. All of the questions were chosen with **Question 1** being the most popular.
- Candidates can improve their subject knowledge of art and architecture, philosophy and of key terms given.
- Whilst most candidates tried to reason and discuss for the **part (b)** questions, this could be further developed with clear paragraph structure and more detailed discussion.

General comments

- Centres and candidates should ensure they are familiar with this new syllabus, and not the previous syllabus, and check they are aware of the new topics and focus required.
- Candidates used the sources but could do more to include obvious points from them in their answers, to help start them off in their responses.
- It is particularly important that candidates respond to the words in the questions and statements: some of them are found in the syllabus and it is expected that candidates know what they mean. Candidates could improve their answers by being more focused and specific with that in mind.
- Candidates should try to build up a discussion in their responses to **part (b)** questions and can do so more effectively with a clear paragraph structure, such as by starting with a short introduction defining the issues and leading through to a conclusion at the end.
- Candidates might further improve their answers by noticing finer points, exceptions to general points, and pointing out complexity and diversity where it is found.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

- (a) **Describe how Umayyad architecture reflected Islamic beliefs. You should refer to Fig. 1.1 and your own knowledge in your answer. (10)**

Question 1 was the most popular choice of question on the paper but was not always well answered. The word ‘architecture’ was not always understood by candidates. The source helped candidates to write about the minaret, which nearly all recognised. Obvious points about the use of the minaret to call people to prayer, and its development from the days of Muhammad (pbuh) with this use, were often missed. Furthermore, the absence of pagan gods or any form of statue or decoration, apart from the geometric patterns in the shape of the minaret, could have been used to explain how the Umayyads used architecture to reflect the Islamic beliefs in the one, unseen God.

More details could have been added in most responses. The focus of this question was as much about Islamic beliefs as architecture, and the best responses clearly stated Islamic beliefs first, then described Umayyad architecture and where any signs or symbols of these beliefs could be found. Candidates might add examples from one of the mosques they have studied, such as the Dome on the Rock in Jerusalem or the Great Mosque of Damascus.

- (b) **‘Umayyad art and culture changed little from pre-Islamic times.’ Evaluate this statement. (15)**

Despite being a popular choice, this was not always well answered. Good responses started by defining the times Umayyad and pre-Islamic and mentioned aspects of art and culture such as statues, calligraphy, idolatry, poetry, drinking and tribalism. To start with, the rejection of idolatry was a visual clue to the changes. This could be evidenced by reference to an Umayyad mosque chosen by the candidate: even where Roman or pre-Islamic materials, such as columns, were re-used, figures were never retained.

Better responses pointed out that the discussion was complex because some Umayyad Caliphs followed different policies from others, which was an advanced point to make. Others noted that pre-Islamic traditions included Christian traditions and some Christian churches were re-purposed as mosques, retaining some of their features, as in Syria. Culture included both humble living, as in the case of the pious Umayyad Caliph Umar II and his court, as well as some others who were less Islamic and thought to use bath houses and wine.

Question 2

- (a) **Describe the religious policies of the early ‘Abbasid caliphs. You should refer to Fig. 2.1 and your own knowledge in your answer. (10)**

The source shows teachings being given from ‘Abbasid times. Various matters might be referred to during this time but preaching particularly was relevant because at the start most people living under the Caliphate were thought not to be Muslim, but in the following two centuries most choose Islam as a result of the policies of the Caliphs and the promotion of religion, education, knowledge and preaching. Some of these movements happened with the sponsorship of the ‘Abbasids and others happened more or less independently but were nevertheless allowed to flourish.

This was a long period of history which began with the ‘Abbasid take over from the Umayyads. The ‘Abbasids used the title ‘Caliph’ to mean God’s representative to lead the Muslims and this was respected as an institution which unified the Islamic world, even when local rulers differed. Some responses mentioned that the ‘Abbasids were often tolerant of different views, such as Shi’i Muslim opinion, and this helped heal rifts which formed under the Umayyads. Others pointed out the ‘Abbasids did not always support the growing religious scholar’s movement and sometimes supported Mu’tazilah views.

- (b) **‘The early ‘Abbasids ruled according to the Qur’an and Sunnah.’ Evaluate this statement. (15)**

This was reasonably well answered. Some chose to answer this from the perspective of what it is for a ruler or rulers to govern according to the Qur’an and Sunnah, giving a few examples from the ‘Abbasids. Others chose to take a couple of examples of different ‘Abbasid Caliphs and draw from their leaderships’ examples of ways they followed the Qur’an and Sunnah. This included explaining how the rulers used the Qur’an and Sunnah to help solve problems during their rule, or the Qur’an and Sunnah helped the rules make decisions about what changes to make. The best responses used examples from the time to back up their arguments.

Weaker responses often lacked focus on the ‘Abbasid rulers and instead talked more generally about the Golden Era of Islam. Others weaker responses did not go into enough details, and would have benefitted from developing their answers.

Question 3

- (a) **Explain how Islamic philosophers used reasoning in their writings.** (10)

Some responses referred to the 'signs' quoted in the Qur'an, such as Qur'an 41:53, as evidence that Muslims should reflect on what they see around them and therefore use philosophy in their reflections. Another angle was to mention kalam, deriving theological knowledge through reasoning, in the first few centuries of Islam. The main focus of answers was falsafah, the philosophy movement which arose during the time of the 'Abbasids. Some Islamic philosophers made observations and speculated on meaning. Others argued that this is incoherent or even heretical, if knowledge derived from revelation was questioned or contradicted.

Weaker responses tended to answer in general terms. Stronger answers mentioned the names of two or three philosophers and how they used reasoning in their writings. These often included Ibn Sina and al-Ghazali, which was a good combination to use as they are quite different in their writings, but both provide examples of advanced use of reasoning. Good answers were clear about what reasoning was, often mentioning this at the start of their essays.

- (b) **'Islamic philosophy has little in common with ancient Greek philosophy.' Evaluate this statement.** (15)

Most responses to this question showed a grounding this topic but needed to build on their knowledge and grapple with the concepts in more depth. The best responses identified some similarities and differences, and then made a conclusion in which a personal judgement was made about whether these constituted 'little' in common or whether there was more in common than that.

Points of similarity included the reasoning style carried out by both Greeks and Muslims, such as the proofs suggested by Ibn Sina. However, Muslims did so within the tradition of revealed text, primarily the Qur'an, so reasoning fell within the limits it set. Some identified different Muslims and the different approaches they took, whereas some were more critical of philosophy than others. An overview or judgement might distinguish between different periods in the development and decline of Islamic philosophy and the extent to which it had aspects in common with the ancient Greeks at those times, before coming to an overall conclusion.

Question 4

- (a) **Examine how geometrical patterns on Islamic buildings reflect the Islamic belief in God as Creator.** (10)

The command word 'examine' suggests that candidates should look at in detail and give evidence of their knowledge and understanding of this topic. However, many candidates gave an overview. There were, however, some good responses which included a range of details in their accounts. Candidates could cross reference with the religious buildings they have chosen to study in detail and include examples from it in this response.

One good response answered this question by writing three clear paragraphs: one about Islamic belief in God as creator, backed up by references to the Qur'an for example. A second paragraph covered geometrical patterns including the rejection of idols and how this came about. The third paragraph brought out the links between the two, giving examples of mosques and their decorations. For example, floral tiles from Islamic buildings in Umayyad Spain, are interspersed with Qur'anic calligraphy on walls, in attractive, geometrically ordered layout, linking the Creator's words and creation. Another example can be seen in the Grand Mosque in Damascus, with the wall decoration of gardens and trees, which might give thanks to God for creating the wonderful gardens, rivers, and beauty.

- (b) **'The oneness of God (tawhid) is more easily understood through architecture than writings.' Evaluate this statement.** (15)

Candidates made an attempt at this question but did not always address the terms in it. Some candidates choose to make a few pencil notes or very short plan to help guide them. In the statement, the words oneness of God, architecture and writings give the factual subject matter which should be addressed. The words 'more easily understood' are critical to the statement because they give the focus for discussion. Bearing in mind this is an AO2 question, the marks are

for that discussion which should be backed up by examples, but not driven by factual details. Therefore, candidates who wrote lengthy paragraphs about facts tended to do less well than those who focused their answers on the discussion and deployed facts to support that.

Better responses referred to at least one mosque and at least one piece of writing examples to help them argue their point. One referred to the Qur'an as a writing which explained the belief in the oneness of God clearly yet needed translation and interpretation from scholars. This was compared to the calligraphy and geometrical patterns in mosques, which show the beauty and infinity of God who is limitless. Either could be concluded as a way which is 'more easily understood' depending on the personal conclusion reached in the response.

ISLAMIC STUDIES

Paper 9488/42
Paper 4

Key messages

- This was the first examination of the new syllabus. Paper 4 was challenging for many candidates who were unfamiliar with analysis and evaluation questions which require more evaluative answers.
- Nevertheless, a range of responses from weak to strong was observed. All of the questions were chosen with **Question 1** being the most popular.
- Whilst most candidates attempted to reason and discuss the questions, this could be further developed with clear paragraph structure and more detailed discussion.

General comments

- It is particularly important that candidates respond to the words in the questions and statements: some of them are found in the syllabus and it is expected that candidates know what they mean. Candidates could improve their answers by being more focused and specific with that in mind.
- Candidates should try to build up a discussion in their responses to this paper and can do so more effectively with a clear paragraph structure, such as by starting with a short introduction defining the issues and leading through to a conclusion at the end.
- Able candidates might further improve their answers by noticing finer points, exceptions to general points, and pointing out complexity and diversity where it is found.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

Question 1 was the most popular choice of question in this paper, with candidates being familiar with the topic of women in Islam, and responses were varied. Candidates demonstrated a great knowledge of Aisha's life, showing how her qualities, such as patience during the incident of false accusation against her (Ifk), her great love for her husband, her memorisation of hadith and scholarship in Fiqh, her political engagement against what she thought was an injustice and her participation in the Battle of Camel being examples to replicate in any era. Better responses showed that though she was a good role model in some areas, she may not have been in other areas, referring to Khadija as being a better role model for working women as she was a successful businesswoman. Weaker responses gave a general overview of Aisha's life as the wife of the Prophet (pbuh), without going into evaluation of her as a role model for women in the modern day.

Question 2

This question could have been answered in two ways, Muslims living in countries where they are minority or in places where they are the majority. Both points of view are valid, but candidates had more chances of discussing the topic with Muslims as minority and discussing the challenges as well as the opportunities that this situation present. As it were candidates who wrote on Muslims in minority, focused only on how Muslims are still able to practise their religion, get good jobs and have a social life without compromising their faith. There were brief mentions of challenges, such as not enough restaurants selling Halal food, but a more thorough analysis of challenges would have improved the answers. For candidates who chose to write on countries where Muslims are majority, they just briefly explained that the non-Muslims should be treated well by the leaders. They could have mentioned how this could be a good opportunity to attract the people of other faiths to Islam by interacting more with them and being good models of what being good Muslims mean.

Question 3

This was not such a popular question, but it was well answered by candidates attempting it. Candidates could demonstrate that both faith and competence are essential qualities for a leader to do their job in an effective manner. If one of the two is lacking, then they will not be able to govern their people properly. Faith helps the leader to be morally pure, staying away from corruption, injustice, etc. and competence which is a leadership skill helps them in the administering their duties in a proper manner. Candidates also took reference from the life of the Prophet (pbuh) and the 4 Rightly guided companions to show that they were good at both, which is the reason they succeeded as leaders. Some candidates used their knowledge of the Umayyad and Abbasid period to show that these Caliphs failed because either faith or competence was lacking, which was a good way of answering this question.