

ISLAMIC RELIGION AND CULTURE

Paper 2056/12

Paper 1

Key Messages

- Candidates should be reminded to read the question carefully to ensure they answer the question as set rather than addressing the topic of the question in general.
- Candidates selecting the question about the Hadiths should ensure they are fully familiar with the content and make reference to this content in their answers to questions.

General Comments

The overall performance of candidates in this examination continues to show improvement, year on year. The improvement is notable in the way candidates address questions and select and organise the relevant information with appropriate development. A majority of candidates answered part **(a)** questions with accurate and detailed knowledge of the topic and showed understanding and skill in selecting and developing information for part **(b)** questions.

However, it was also notable that a number of responses were not sufficiently focused on the detail of the question set to answer fully. The skills of selection, organisation and presentation of the correct material for answers, should be emphasised by Centres in preparing candidates.

Comments on Specific Questions

Part 1

Question 1

- (a)** The best answers showed good knowledge and focused on the way in which the tribal system functioned in Pre-Islamic Arabia.

However, many candidates wrote, in general, about life in Pre-Islamic Arabia, including a range of religious, social and economic practices instead of focussing solely on the tribal system as required in the question. Generalisation and inaccuracy limited the amount of credit that could be gained in such answers.

- (b)** The scope of the answer was wider here than in part **(a)** but very few candidates sufficiently explained the positive aspects of Arabian life that were retained after the advent of Islam. The majority of responses were limited, making only two or three accurate points but writing in general about the ways in which the Arabs changed after Islam.

Question 2

- (a) (i)** The majority of candidates answered this question well. Most candidates knew the relevant facts about the Prophet's Grandfather, Abu Muttalib. A few candidates confused him with Abu Talib and wrote that he was the one who initiated the Prophet (pbuh) in fair business dealing.

- (ii)** Information about Amina was often not entirely accurate in a number of answers for this question. Some candidates confused Amina with the wet nurse, Halima.

- (b)** Good responses showed awareness and understanding of the reasons why Muhammad (pbuh) was respected by the Meccans and given the titles Truthful and Trustworthy. Most candidates explained that he never told a lie, was always honest in business and never took part in any vices. Most answers mentioned the fact that Khadija was impressed by his great honesty to the point of

proposing marriage to him. The best answers also referred to the influence of the Fijar War and the Hilf al Fudal in his early years, his compassion for the poor and orphans, his frugal lifestyle and the wisdom he displayed in the incident of replacing the black stone during the rebuilding of the Ka'ba.

Question 3

- (a) This question was well answered by candidates who could identify the motive for the migration to Abyssinia. These candidates accurately described the sequence of events following it, giving the number and names of Muslims who migrated and relating the efforts of the Quraish to get the Negus to return them and how this was thwarted by Najashi's recognition of the sincerity of the Muslims.

Weaker responses, which gave only a general outline of what happened, did not use the names of the sahabas such as Jafar, Uthman and his wife Ruqayya and could have included more details about what happened when Jafar Ibn Abi Talib addressed the Negus. Some candidates mistakenly wrote that the Prophet (pbuh) was part of the people who migrated to Abyssinia but gained credit for other, more accurate parts of their answer. Some of the weakest answers confused the event with the migration to Medina.

- (b) Candidates were expected to explain the ways in which migration made a clear division in the story of the Prophet (pbuh) and the early Muslims from living in fear of persecution to being able to live their lives according to Islam. Common points that candidates made were that migration put an end to persecution, gave them freedom to follow their religion and encouraged unity and the institution of brotherhood, as with mujahireen and ansar in Medina. The best answers also showed awareness of why some of the other aspects of migration encouraged both the spiritual and physical development of the Muslim community. Some candidates misunderstood the demands of the question and instead of explaining the advantages of migration they described the events of the Prophet's migration to Medina.

Question 4

- (a) and (b) This question was a less popular choice. Those who answered the question produced relevant answers.

Question 5

- (a) This question was answered in detail by a large number of candidates. The causes and events of the Battle of Trench were well known and there were some very strong answers.
- (b) This part was generally not answered as well as the first part of the question but there were still some very good responses. Candidates' evaluation of the final outcome of the battle often showed an understanding that although there had been no pitched battle the outcome was both a real and a moral victory for the Muslims and a defeat for the Meccans who were left demoralised and humiliated by their failure to crush the Muslims even though they were a large army of allies.

Question 6

- (a) The relationship between the Prophet (pbuh) and Ali was well known. Most responses were good, especially on details of the kin and personal relationships and the role Ali played in the escape from Mecca. Very good responses developed the answers beyond this to include some further description e.g. of Ali as scribe, as Lion of Allah, as the Prophet's chosen 'brother' in Medina and as one who helped to wash and bury the body of the Prophet (pbuh) when he died. Some candidates knew of the Ghadir Khumm episode.
- (b) This question on why the combined rule of the Four Rightly Guided Caliphs was known as the Golden Age of Islam was more challenging for candidates. Only the strongest candidates saw the rule of all four Caliphs as an era in which the common elements of their rules demonstrated the fundamental principles of Islam. Many candidates named each Caliph and described one or two aspects of their rule, which gained them some credit, but answers were limited.

The skill of seeing all four periods as one era, containing the very best elements of Islamic rule, should be developed to enable candidates to gain this particular perspective of Islamic history.

Candidates should be encouraged to study the rule and achievement of each Caliph separately and then, as an era.

Question 7

- (a) This was a popular question. However it was only answered well by a minority of candidates.
- (i) Most candidates knew Muslims say “Alhamdulillah” when facing a happy circumstance. Some were aware that it also was a sign of gratitude for Allah’s favour. Most mentioned that it is used as part of a reply to the question “How are you?” Some mentioned its use in response to sneezing.
- (ii) Candidates could give an example of the use of the phrase “insha’Allah” but the origins of it in the Qur’an were often not known. Some candidates made the point that nothing happens unless Allah permits it. Answers were usually brief and repetitive of this one point.
- (b) The performance on (b) was much stronger. The majority of candidates produced a satisfactory answer on why Muslims should follow the Qur’an. The best answers included and explained a wide range of reasons. Weaker answers usually focused on one or two aspects of the Qur’an being a guide to life or as a guide on right and wrong. Some of these responses were repetitive on one point and did not develop the answer fully.

Question 8

- (a) The majority of candidates could quote or paraphrase Sura Quraish accurately but other knowledge about the Sura was limited. Very few demonstrated that they knew that this was a follow up to Sura Fil.
- (b) In contrast, the performance on (b) was very strong. In a large number of responses, candidates produced very thorough answers. The theme of Sura Ikhlas and the meaning of the various and unique attributes of God specifically described in it were thoughtfully explained. Weaker answers began well but lost the focus on Sura Ikhlas or were unsure about its content and wrote about other Suras.

Question 9

- (a) This was one of the most frequently answered questions. However, it was often mistakenly seen to be merely an opportunity to retell the story of the sacrifice of Ismail and candidates did not refer to the rituals of Hajj and Umra, or, to the other parts of the story of Ibrahim, Hajirah and Ismail, that are remembered on Hajj. Candidates who developed the answer well most commonly referred to the reason for the hastening between Safa and Marwa and the collection of Zamzam water as well as the sacrifice on Id-ul-Adha. Only a few candidates also included the stoning of Satan.
- (b) Many candidates produced strong answers to this question. Most answers explained that the Ka’ba is important because it was built by Adam and then restored by Ibrahim and Ismail, it is, symbolically, the House of Allah, the Qiblah for prayer and all pilgrims do tawaf around it during Hajj. Good answers also included the importance of the Black Stone and the Ka’ba as the destination of Umra. The very best answers also included the events of Sura Fil which demonstrate the importance of the Ka’ba to Allah and his protection of it.

Question 10

- (a) Often candidates gave an accurate account of those entitled to receive Zakat, as described in Sura 9:60. Credit was given for quoting the Sura and for paraphrase or development of some of the categories. Some weak responses could not go beyond the poor and needy and some candidates unnecessarily described in detail how Zakat is calculated.
- (b) The concept that all things belong to Allah and wealth is held in trust so giving Zakat is a duty required by Allah was understood by the majority of candidates. Most candidates mentioned the concept of unity/brotherhood in Islam and the helping of others. Some mentioned Zakat being a purification of the money and of the person and a means of the compulsory redistribution of wealth, to reduce the difference between rich and poor. However, most responses mentioned only a few of these points.

Question 11

- (a) Both parts (i) and (ii) of this question, on the significance of Laylat al Qadr and Tarawih prayers, were well answered.
- (b) This question was relatively well-answered. Many candidates were aware that fasting creates patience/self-control, makes one aware of the situation of the poor and the desire to help them, that it increases the sense of brotherhood in the community and is a means to attain forgiveness. Sharing food, praying together, being more generous and compassionate and participating in i'tikaf were the most common strengthening elements identified. Some candidates included the strengthening of family ties in the sharing of Sehri and prayers each day before fasting.

Question 12

- (a) Candidates found the questions on the Hadiths challenging. Some candidates who chose the question could not identify the correct Hadith and this limited their ability to produce relevant answers. Clearer knowledge and understanding of the prescribed Hadiths was needed.
- (i) Doubt (Hadith 11): This was the better answered of the two questions. Some candidates were able to correctly quote the Hadith, for which they gained credit, and give a correct example of how it might be applied but most failed to adequately explain its meaning and were repetitive.
- (ii) Tolerance (Hadith 16): There were some candidates who correctly identified that the content was about anger, were able to correctly quote the Hadith and explain that it was advice to keep anger under control. However, some erroneously wrote about tolerance in general, how we should tolerate people and not discriminate against them without linking this to the Hadith.
- (b) Many of the responses to this question lacked the necessary level of detailed knowledge required to answer well. Candidates were often not familiar with the many aspects of Hadith literature that make it significant as a primary source of Islam and therefore an important guide for Muslims. This year, as previously, there was evidence that this is a part of the Syllabus on which candidates needed to be better prepared.

ISLAMIC RELIGION AND CULTURE

Paper 2056/13

Paper 1

Key Messages

Part (b) questions which require explanation and interpretation of teachings and events were often less well answered than **Part (a)**. Candidates should read the complete question before selecting which questions to answer to ensure they are confident in answering both parts.

General Comments

The overall performance showed that a number of candidates had very good knowledge of the Syllabus and were aware of the amount of detail and explanation required to produce good answers. In particular, **Part (a)** questions were well answered. Candidates whose performance was good or satisfactory could have improved their performance by ensuring that the information selected addressed the question directly. Some answers were a mixture of accurate and inaccurate information that showed candidates had not read the question carefully enough.

Comments on Specific Questions

Part 1

Question 1

- (a) Some candidates answered this question in a thorough and detailed manner, mentioning aspects of the economic system Pre-Islam. However, other candidates concentrated on religious and social aspects in the pre-Islamic period mainly focusing on the treatment of women. Candidates needed to focus their answers on the question as set to produce entirely relevant answers. Generalisation and inaccuracy limits the amount of credit that can be gained.
- (b) Candidates mainly concentrated on changes which took place in Mecca but some answers were limited to only explaining how the banning of usury improved conditions and the introduction of Zakat created a fairer distribution of wealth.

Question 2

- (a) There was an overall good performance on this question with many candidates producing very strong responses. Answers were generally well structured and gave an accurate account of the events of the Prophet's declaration at Safa and the Meccans' reaction.
- (b) Generally, the majority of candidates appeared to understand the significance of the Night Journey and its importance in raising the morale of the Prophet (pbuh) at a difficult time and establishing his place among other prophets, whom he led in prayer. The best answers gave a good interpretation of the wonder of the different events and contrasted it with the disbelief and ignorant attitude of the Quraish, singling out Abu Bakr as the only one who believed the Prophet (pbuh). Some weaker responses mentioned only the importance of receiving the command of five times prayer and some of these were confused as to the number of prayers. A minority of candidates mistakenly described Hijrah, the migration to Medina instead of Mir'raj, the Night Journey.

Question 3

- (a) (i) This was answered well by the majority of candidates.
- (ii) Knowledge of the events in the cave of Thawr was not as accurate as on the cave of Hira but most responses were satisfactory. Mostly, candidates included the story of Abu Bakr and the scorpion sting in their accounts and this did not receive credit. Credit was given for the version that is authenticated by the Qur'an and Hadith.
- (b) Very few candidates performed well on this question with the majority of candidates producing responses that were limited. Stronger answers included the Prophet's relationship with the Jews of Medina, his attempts to form a peaceful alliance with the Jews and their constant betrayal. This is a significant area of study in forming an overall view of the life of the achievements of the Prophet (pbuh) in Medina.

Question 4

- (a) (i) There were many good responses to this question. Candidates answered with enthusiasm on the bravery and drama of the role in Islam played by Hamza.
- (ii) Candidates wrote well about Bilal, the torture he received, that he was chosen in Medina to say the first adhan and that he called the adhan from the roof of the Ka'ba after the Conquest of Mecca. Most identified him as representative of racial equality in Islam. A less commonly included fact was that he no longer gave the adhan after the death of the Prophet (pbuh).
- (b) There were some good responses from candidates who showed an awareness of the ways in which the Prophet's teaching and example raised the status of women.

Question 5

- (a) In answers to this question, candidates were expected to describe the events in the last year of the Prophet's life. Many candidates confused **5 (a)** with **5 (b)** and only described the teaching in the farewell address, ignoring the other events during the last year of the Prophet's life.
- (b) There were some thoughtful answers which showed a good understanding of the teaching in the farewell address. A few answers described the farewell address but did not attempt any explanation of its importance for Muslims.

Question 6

This was a reasonably popular question. Candidates generally had satisfactory knowledge of Umar's caliphate but were confused as to how to select the correct information for **Parts (a)** and **(b)**.

- (a) Some strong, accurate descriptions of Umar's achievements were produced for this question. However many answers were often brief with only one or two accurate points made.
- (b) Only the best candidates were able to successfully explain what made Umar a successful ruler. The best approach was to take examples of different aspects of his rule and to explain how these showed strong Islamic principles, justice, equality, morality, compassion and benefitted the people and strengthened the Islamic State.

Part 2

Question 7

- (a) A small minority of candidates answered this question. Those who chose the question demonstrated knowledge about the structure of the Qur'an and produced good answers.
- (b) This question proved challenging to most candidates. Most responses concentrated on describing the Qur'an as a holy book and listed random details about its content, rather than attempting to

explain the benefit to Muslims of understanding it as a source of knowledge and infallible guidance that should be applied in all aspect of life.

Question 8

(a) and (b) This was not a popular choice. Generally, **Part (b)** on Salat was better answered than **Part (a)** on Sura Kauthar.

Question 9

- (a)** This question asked for an account of the story of Nuh (AS) and the flood. The majority of responses were well structured and gave an accurate account of the story, as related in the Qur'an. There were very few weak answers.
- (b)** Most answers to this question on what is to be learned about Allah from the story were perceptive and thoughtful. However, there was evidence that candidates did not feel able to write at length on this and so although many responses had merit they were not sufficiently developed or they were repetitive. Candidates needed to be able to accurately retell these stories of the prophets, as well as spending time on studying the lessons for Muslims that can be gained from the stories.

Question 10

- (a)** This question produced some very strong responses overall. Most answers were well structured and showed knowledge of the timeline of rituals of the Hajj as well as details of how they are performed.
- (b)** Candidates showed a good understanding of the influence and impact of Hajj on the life of an individual and on the community in answering this question. The rituals were linked to spiritual fulfilment, forgiveness and various aspects of community cohesion. Most answers were well structured, linking rituals and explanations in an organised manner.

Question 11

- (a)** Descriptions of the ceremonies that follow the birth of a baby were mostly good or very good. A number of answers could have been improved if the candidates had shown wider knowledge of the traditionally accepted rituals and not just recounted their own experiences of having witnessed a ceremony. Inevitably, these answers did not always cover the full range of rituals that might be performed.
- (b)** There were interesting answers to this question but many of them were fairly brief focussing only on teaching children to have good manners, respect for elders, how to pray and to recite/read the Qur'an.

Question 12

- (a) (i)** Good responses showed knowledge and understanding of Hadith 16, containing the Prophet's advice on tolerance and self-control instead of resorting to anger. Most candidates also pointed out that the Prophet (pbuh) demonstrated this in his own patient behaviour when persecuted.
- (ii)** Only the strongest candidates produced satisfactory responses to this question. Weaker answers were confused about the Hadith and wrote mainly about repentance for sins and Allah being all-forgiving. Most candidates either misread the Hadith or did not understand that it is concerned with intention and that Allah might pardon faults, forgetfulness and actions done under compulsion.
- (b)** Many candidates did not answer this part of the question and those who attempted it did not produce thorough responses. A study of the importance of the Hadith and the reason why (as well as how) the words and actions of the Prophet (pbuh) have been collected and are a primary source of Islam is an important part of the Syllabus and is vital for candidates choosing to answer questions on the Hadiths.