

ISLAMIYAT

Paper 2058/01

Paper 1

General comments

These comments apply to Paper 2058/01.

Generally speaking, candidates were well prepared for this examination and despite there being a change in syllabus and Question Paper format, they managed to present basic facts required to gain good marks. Most candidates showed they managed the time allocated for the paper well, as there were very few papers that were not able to answer the four required questions. Some candidates did answer all questions, or **Questions 1, 3, 4, and 5**, missing out **Question 2** which is a compulsory question, but these were very much a minority. Also, a small minority answered only three questions instead of the required four.

With the revised syllabus, and also with the previous syllabus, there has been a move towards asking the candidates to evaluate as well as present facts about a topic. This is something that candidates had started to do well in the previous couple of years. This year again many candidates made good attempts in **part (b)** questions to offer some understanding of the topic, but there are a couple of points that teachers should note. One is that although understanding and evaluation is required, it is generally asked for in **part (b)** questions, which in this paper carried four marks. Candidates should therefore be advised to understand that **part (a)** questions carry more marks (except in **Question 1**), and so should think about this when planning their answers. Candidates should also note that although evaluation is being encouraged, it is not the only thing to be focused on; facts also need to be learnt and presented. The emphasis on understanding and evaluation has been done to move away from the old method of producing pages and pages of text without any understanding of it, but it does not mean that knowledge of key topics is not being tested. So, e.g., in **Question 1**, which carries equal weighting of marks in **parts (a) and (b)**, candidates should pay equal attention to knowledge *and* evaluation, whereas this year there was a tendency to write very little in **part (a)** and lots in **part (b)**.

As with previous reports it is worth mentioning that teachers should encourage their candidates to come to the exam expecting to take each question on its own merit without comparing it to previous questions/answers they may have learnt; they should read the question paper carefully to ensure they know what is being asked of them; and they should plan their answer to correspond to the question being asked, and not a general topic. There were a significant minority of candidates who did not appear to have read a question correctly, in particular **Questions 2 and 4**.

Related to this, candidates should know that although mark schemes from previous examinations are published by CIE, it is not possible to copy the information in them directly into any exam paper. Candidates who have copied directly from published mark schemes in bullet format did not gain marks, as the syllabus states that they should write in prose and in their own words.

Overall, however, candidates seemed to have performed well and the change in syllabus and Question Paper did not seem to have any adverse effects on the quality of answers compared with previous years. Many candidates addressed the questions confidently and gave well developed answers to **part (a)** questions with some excellent thoughtful and mature attempts at **part (b)** questions which showed a wide and thorough understanding of the subject. Of course, performance did vary from Centre to Centre and there were some obvious examples of information having been learned by rote rather than selected to answer the questions.

Comments on specific questions

Paper 1

Question 1

This question was relatively well answered with major themes being identified in all suras. However, there was some confusion when answering this question where some candidates answered **parts (a) and (b)** together without differentiating them, and so would have lost marks for not following the rubric. Good practice would be to give a descriptive answer in **part (a)** for two suras, and an evaluative answer in **part (b)** for two suras.

The better answers were careful to avoid paraphrasing of the translation which is already given.

(a) For **part (a)** good answers would have been able to pick out key themes from two passages. For passage 1, they talked about God's mercy, His mastery of all things created, as well as being the master of the Day of Judgement. Further, the relationship with His creation was mentioned acknowledging that God gives guidance to stop mankind from going astray.

For passage 2, good answers talked about God being creator of everything, and how he is able to create things from nothing/something insignificant. Excellent answers were able to talk about the importance of knowledge and to elaborate on the knowledge that God has given mankind.

For passage 3, again good answers recognised that God is the creator of everything and were able to talk about the benefits He has given to mankind. They were also able to mention the emphasis in the sura on the Oneness of God.

Most candidates were able to give a description of some of these points relating to two passages they had chosen, passages one and two being the most popular. A significant minority wrote very brief descriptions which would not have got them high marks.

(b) Here, good answers would have been able to say what these teachings mean for Muslims today and how these teachings are presented specifically in these suras.

For passage 1, good answers talked about the relationship between God and humans and how humans should obey God's teachings. God is the only one who can help mankind and is there to help when asked. His guidance is given in the Qur'an and sunnah and so Muslims should follow these in their everyday lives. Excellent answers would have shown this through examples.

For passage 2, good answers talked about God's power being seen in His ability to create humans and that after He has created them He provides them with knowledge so that they are not left on their own. Excellent answers commented on why mankind should do all they can to learn throughout their lives.

For passage 3, good answers talked about the benefits the natural world holds for them and why God has created the things mentioned in the sura for mankind. Excellent answers talked about acknowledging who their sustenance has come from, He being the creator of everything, and ways in which they can be grateful.

A significant minority of candidates were able to answer this part of the question well, with thoughtful and insightful answers. Most candidates gave average answers, some because they did not fully understand the question. Many of them just repeated what they had written in **part (a)**.

Question 2

(a) Most answers to this part of the question were of an average level.

Candidates were able to talk about the place of the Qur'an in Islamic legal thinking, but not all candidates gave good answers about the place of the sunnah being important as it is the model of the final messenger. Good answers moved beyond the basic points about the Hadith explaining the Qur'an in context. Higher level answers also illustrated their answer with examples of the practical application of these two primary sources. There were some very good/excellent answers with clear, detailed examples which showed substantial understanding of how the process works

where the Qur'an is the first source being God's word and that the Hadith expand upon the Qur'an and the two complement each other.

Few candidates were able to make points about how the Qur'an and Hadith do not contradict each other, but rather are complementary to one another, which is why they are used together as primary sources. There was also a high level of repetition in this question about the importance of the Qur'an. Some candidates went on to discuss the importance of *ijma* and *qiyas* in Islamic legal thinking, which was not required in this question.

- (b) There were some good answers to this question, but generally answers were vague. The best answers offered reasons about the weakness of *qiyas* as a general source of law, explaining that it was due to the fact that the personal opinion of an individual may be subject to error, and why some scholars preferred the alternative *ijma* or the Shi'a preference of using *'aql*.

However, many answers had a general comment on *qiyas* not being liked because it is based on individual reasoning, and there were a significant number of candidates who tried to argue that *qiyas* is not needed in Islamic legal thinking, so instead of trying to answer why *some* scholars reject *qiyas* they made a general statement about it not being reliable and so rejected by all scholars.

Question 3

This question was a popular choice with candidates out of the three optional questions.

- (a) Overall this part was answered well, with most candidates choosing to talk about the battles of Badr and Uhud and giving good, detailed information about them. Some candidates also chose to work on the Battle of Khandaq. There were a few unusual answers with the battle of Muthah, Hunain, Conquest of Makkah and Tabuk as well which were not well thought out enough to gain higher marks.

Lower level answers wrote inaccurately or padded out their answer with irrelevant detail.

- (b) Answers for this part often failed to achieve the higher levels because they were too general. So although many candidates were able to pick out the Prophet's conduct from one battle, e.g. his patience, they were not able to relate it to their own lives or current affairs.

The best answers showed a mature reflection on behaviour and attitude to events today rather than just a general comment about behaviour.

Question 4

This question was also popular with candidates to answer.

- (a) This was generally well answered, and good answers were able to give a detailed and concise narrative about the migration to Abyssinia, from the persecution of the new Muslims to the events in King Negus's court. Many candidates gave an excellent account including the names and number of migrants, the difficulties faced during the hijra and the acceptance of Islam. Candidates made the connection between Christianity and Islam being similar and also pointed out why they thought so.

Some lower level answers were unbalanced with a lot of detail about persecution and a lack of detail of about why they decided to go (lack of protection/vulnerability) as well as what happened in Abyssinia.

Unfortunately a significant minority of candidates wrote at length about the Hijra to Madinah.

- (b) This part was answered well on the whole, but there was some confusion with a number of candidates misunderstanding that the question was referring to the pursuit by the Quraish of the Muslims who escaped to Abyssinia. Many answers were further descriptions of the persecution of the Muslims in Makkah, possibly because candidates confused the word 'pursue' with 'persecution'. Again, candidates should do their best to read the question carefully and understand it before attempting to answer it.

Question 5

This question was the least popular with candidates to answer.

- (a) Where chosen, this question was answered quite well with candidates giving relevant and detailed facts about the lives of the two grandsons. Good answers mentioned their relationship with the prophet, their role during the various caliphates that came before theirs and an account of their individual story after their father's death.

However, there were a significant number of candidates who gave superficial accounts of the early life of the prophet's grandsons and even when some of the events were known, candidates did not demonstrate knowledge of the major political conflict which arose with the Umayyads and went against the faith of the Muslims.

- (b) This part of the question was not very well answered. Candidates who understood the above events made a good attempt to answer this question about why the sons of Ali were martyrs.

The majority of answers were weaker and often just descriptions of how they died or basic comments about dying for Islam. There was a lot of repetition in this part of the question from **part (a)**.

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Paper 2058/02

Paper 2

General Comments

This year not only was there a new syllabus but also a new Levels of Response marking system. Despite the changes the overall performance of the candidates who attempted the May/June 2009 Islamiyat paper remained good for which they need to be congratulated. Also the teachers who understood the new syllabus and the new Levels of Response marking need to be commended for teaching their candidates effectively to cope with the new challenges posed by the paper. In **Question 1**, candidates needed to answer using two Hadiths from the four given and the Examiner after reading both (a) answers and both (b) answers together awarded a global mark for each part. From many Centres the candidates answered the two (a)'s and (b)'s together which reflected the understanding of the levels system by the teachers and their skill in imparting the technique of answering the question to their candidates. It is highly recommended that all Centres guide their candidates to answer both **part (a)** and **(b)** in question 1 together.

Although the overall standard was good the attention of the teachers must be drawn to the fact that **part (a)** answers are knowledge based in which the candidates must be able to recall, select and present relevant facts from the topic they are being questioned on. **Part (b)** answers, however, test the understanding of the candidates and are evaluative in nature. Questions therefore need to be read carefully and understood by the candidates before they attempt to answer them. Also attention should be paid to the mark allocation. In **Question 2(a)** a number of candidates misread the question writing mainly about the history and authority of Hadiths whereas the question asked the candidate about the teachings of Hadiths in relation to Muslim communal life. Those who got it right were able to bring in Hadiths from **Question 1** and add others. The expectation when marking this question was that the candidates would make references to the 20 Hadiths prescribed for special study and those who did that scored better than those who did not. Candidates from some Centres who attempted **Question 3**, which dealt with the expansion of the Islamic empire under the rule of the caliph 'Umar, gave some excellent answers including dates, the main battles and important details of those battles including the names of the commanders in charge. **Questions 4** and **5** were on the whole the most popular and well answered questions. Having said that **part (b)** answers for the most proved more challenging and here candidates must be asked to think for themselves, discussions within the classroom bringing forth varied view points could be a way forward.

Comments on Specific Questions

Question 1

In this question the candidates need to address two Hadiths from the four given and in **part (a)** describe the teaching itself and in **part (b)** they need to explain how this teaching can be put into action. In answering this question there was a lot of overlap between **part (a)** and **(b)**. Candidates could apply the teaching to the lives of Muslims and give an example in answering **part (b)** of the question. However, examples given should be sensible. This year, in answering this part of the question, a few candidates brought in other Hadiths to explain the one set in the question which was a good. Others brought in contemporary issues which were ingenuous e.g. being sincere with the authorities, respecting traffic lights, paying taxes etc. The distinction between **parts (a)** and **(b)** must be emphasised by the teachers and repetition in the two parts must be avoided. Also, candidates should be encouraged to answer both **part (a)** and both **part (b)** answers together. The two (a)s together and the two (b)s together are given a maximum of 4 marks each, the length of the answers should therefore reflect this and candidates do not need to write very long answers for the two parts of this question.

Question 2

Quite a number of candidates did not understand this question as stated in the general comments. Instead of stating what Hadiths teach in relation to Muslim communal life candidates wrote about the history of Hadiths and how they were collected. However those who understood the question answered quite well, describing the various teachings in the Hadiths about the care of orphans and widows and the needy, the rights of neighbours, the importance of trading fairly etc. The good answers quoted many Hadiths and linked them into the answer. Some candidates simply used the Hadiths given in **Question 1** to answer this question. The right approach would have been to use and quote Hadiths set aside for special study. Those who used others besides the 20 given in the syllabus were not in any way penalized.

In **part (b)** of this question many of the candidates were able to give the difference between *musnad* and *musannaf* Hadiths but did not go beyond to give a fuller answer to discuss their usage.

Question 3

This was not a very popular question and amongst those who did attempt it the answers were mixed. Some candidates gave detailed and coherent accounts of the progress of Muslim battles under the caliphate of 'Umar whereas others confused dates, wars and the names of the commanders. They seemed more confident about the Persian wars and concentrated more on them. In **part (b)** candidates found it challenging to move beyond describing how the caliph 'Umar died to show how his manner of death reflected his character.

Question 4

A very popular question and generally well answered by most who attempted it. The candidates confidently wrote about the battles of Camel and Siffin giving detailed and descriptive answers. They were able to chart the events of the caliphate of 'Ali in great detail, however some candidates were confused about details of the arbitration and the role of the Kharijites. **Part (b)** as in the previous questions proved to be more challenging and candidates found it difficult to discuss the complexity of motivations and resorted to summarizing the points made in **part (a)**, having said that some Examiners found that some candidates gave some very insightful accounts and perspectives on why Talha and Zubayr opposed 'Ali but such answers were few.

Question 5

This was also a very popular and generally well answered question. **Part (b)** was again disappointing as candidates were not able to give a fair explanation of how belief in prophets influences the daily living of Muslims. For a good **part (b)** answer candidates could have linked their answers to contemporary issues and given practical examples. References to interfaith relations could also have been made in answering this part of the question.

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