

ISLAMIYAT

Paper 2058/01

Paper 1

General comments

In general, candidates seemed well prepared to answer all the questions set in this examination, and showed a good grasp of the basic facts required. Nearly all candidates were able to complete the paper, indicating that they had managed the time allowed well. A few candidates answered all the questions in the paper rather than choosing the options allowed in each paper, but these were very much in a minority.

Previous reports have identified a number of recurring mistakes in candidates' performances. Among these has often been the failure to answer the questions as set in the papers. As teachers will know, questions are designed to test candidates' ability to present facts clearly and also to evaluate the importance of these facts. Questions never ask for a general account of a whole topic (e.g. the life of the Prophet, or the Pillars of Islam), but indicate as precisely as possible particular aspects of a topic (for example, the persecutions suffered by the Muslims while the Prophet was in Makka, the relations between the Prophet and the Jewish tribes of Madina, the distinctive elements of Friday congregational prayers, the major observances of the annual pilgrimage). And they nearly always ask for evaluative comments about the aspects already described.

This makes it extremely important for candidates to read the questions closely and to work out what exactly they are asking, which might well mean that candidates have to read a question a number of times in order to understand its wording. After they have done this, they should spend some time deciding what elements to include in the descriptive part and what to include in the evaluative part.

Teachers would be advised to spend time explaining the structure of the questions to their candidates in order to alert them to exactly how they can detect these different elements, and answer them properly. It might also help if teachers explained to candidates what is intended by terms that often appear in questions such as 'Give an account of' and 'Give brief descriptions of', on the one hand, and, on the other hand, 'Explain the importance of' and 'Explain the significance of'. 'Account', 'description' and 'outline' all indicate that the question is asking for a *factual* answer, which should be concise and accurate; 'importance' and 'significance' indicate that the question is asking for some *evaluation*. Candidates often lose marks by not showing they are aware of this distinction. For example, in this season's Paper 2058/01 **Question 2**, many candidates gave a descriptive account in answering part (a) and part (b), whereas in part (b) they should have concentrated on giving specific examples of how the qualities of the Prophet, e.g. honesty, can be implemented in their own lives/modern society.

It was clear from many scripts in this examination that candidates who had been taught these simple techniques performed best.

As with previous years, it has been noticed that many candidates from the same Centre will have rehearsed a set answer to each question, although there seems to have been some effort to change this and allow candidates to write in their own way. This was most noticeable in **Question 2**.

Some candidates lost marks for writing in bullet points, rather than continuous prose, particularly on **Question 1** where some candidates were replicating brief answers taken directly from a previously published mark scheme. All questions should be answered in continuous prose and not in note form.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

This was generally answered well, with the best answers giving the overall theme or themes contained in the passages chosen as well as writing in continuous prose.

The best way to answer this question is to identify the main teaching or teachings (there may be more than one) that each passage contains. The question was not asking for a commentary on each verse or for a paraphrase of the passage, but for statements about the main Qur'anic themes within them.

Teachers should note that comments about the Sura and verse numbers and whether the passage was revealed in Makka or Madina are irrelevant (the question paper actually identifies the passage). Candidates who write about these are wasting time.

- (a) Here, a good answer would have referred to believers relying on their faith and not their origins for salvation and that the passage is referring to the origins of the Hajj.

Some of the better answers were careful to avoid paraphrasing of the translation, which is already given. Candidates should also avoid giving narratives of the trials imposed on Ibrahim.

- (b) Here, a good answer would have given a distinction between the night journey (*isra*) and ascent to heaven (*miraj*) as well as giving the names of the two mosques and the two cities that the Prophet was taken from and to.

- (c) Here, a good answer would have referred to the theme of *Tawhid* being a central feature of Islam and of the Qur'an. Few candidates were able to make the distinction between the two and so generally only those able to do so gained full marks.

Question 2

- (a) This part was answered reasonably well by many candidates, although equally, many candidates wrote about the same quality more than once, thereby losing out on vital marks. Good answers would have chosen four specific qualities, given a different example for each of them from the Prophet's life (rather than a general description of the quality) and included a quotation for each quality. Some examples of the types of qualities Examiners look for are: honest/truthful, forgiving/merciful and trustworthy, but not that the Prophet prayed all his prayers or learnt the Qur'an by heart. Many candidates did not realise that honesty and truthfulness were in effect the same quality, and so gave similar examples under two separate headings. A few candidates also confused some of the stories from the life of the Prophet resulting in the wrong example being given for a chosen quality. Other candidates did not realise that truthful and trustworthy are different qualities and so used them interchangeably.

In descriptive questions candidates often do not gain marks by getting basic facts wrong or by allowing themselves to become distracted by what they have just written. This results in the answer being more general than specific to the question, or it results in the candidates not completing the question. For example, some candidates wrote about two/three qualities of the Prophet and gave many examples of these qualities, but were unable to gain more marks because they overlooked the need to mention another one/two qualities. The need for planning answers is paramount.

- (b) There were some good answers to this part, but many candidates did not show how the two chosen qualities could be applied to their own lives/the modern world and instead repeated examples of how these qualities were shown in the Prophet's life. Excellent answers showed, for example, how honesty can be used in school/at work no matter what the consequences, and then went on to give an example of how students should not lie about their homework if they have not done it. This kind of answer shows that the candidate has thought about the relevancy of these qualities in their own lives, which is what the evaluative part of each question often looks for.

Question 3

This question was slightly more popular with candidates out of the two optional questions.

- (a) As said above, in descriptive answers candidates should be accurate and complete. It is very easy to lose out on marks by leaving out a basic fact or putting something wrongly. Here, many candidates scored highly, but a noticeable minority did not score highly by, for example, failing to mention the two *adhaans* for Friday prayers or that people should listen attentively to the sermon. Others spent more time describing the actions of the prayer (postures and positions) rather than focusing on what makes the Friday prayer different from any other prayer.

Overall this section was answered well.

- (b) This part was very well answered, as candidates were able to compare the two types of prayers successfully. Only a small minority mistook *du'a* for *nawafil* prayers prayed after *salat*.

Question 4

- (a) A high number of candidates answered this question and it was generally well answered. Most candidates gained more marks in the description of the compilation under Abu Bakr. Many candidates confused Caliph Uthman with Caliph Umar. Candidates could have given better details of the way in which the Qur'an was compiled under Uthman.
- (b) This part was not as well answered, as candidates gave short answers even though this part of the question is worth six marks. Candidates could have mentioned that the Qur'an would not survive in the memories of the companions alone, that Muslims needed a single source of guidance and that only the original revelation would ensure unity.

ISLAMIYAT

Paper 2058/02

Paper 2

General comments

Although this was a challenging paper both in the depth and breadth of knowledge and in the understanding it demanded, most candidates seemed well prepared to attempt it, and many answered it fully and thoroughly. Very few scripts were incomplete. There were a small number of outstanding answers, showing that some candidates not only knew the facts of the syllabus extensively but also knew how to apply them in their answers. The Examiners congratulate them and their teachers on this achievement.

A few common features in scripts call for comment. In the first place, there was a general tendency not to pause and think what questions were asking but to rush into answers. Questions are carefully worded, and candidates should be advised to read the instructions closely and repeatedly in order to understand exactly what they are asked to do. An example of not reading the question occurred in answers to **Question 3** in this paper, which asked for four incidents from the life of the Prophet and Rightly Guided Caliphs from between the years 622 and 661. These dates are, of course, given to guide candidates to the period between the Prophet's migration to Madina and the death of the fourth Rightly Guided Caliph 'Ali. But a number of candidates gave as examples the Prophet's visit to al-Ta'if and the first migration to Ethiopia. A moment's thought would have reminded them that these took place before 622.

In the second place, some answers were not properly planned. In addition to reading questions carefully, candidates should spend some minutes planning their answer before starting to write on a question. This enables them to decide what details to include and to ensure they do not leave out anything that is important, and it also enables them to decide what details should be given in the various parts of their answer. Despite the fact that these few minutes may appear to take away precious writing time, they can help to produce well formulated answers. It was clear from answers to **Question 4**, on the Caliph 'Umar, that some candidates had not thought about what they would write, and so they put details about his caliphate in part **(a)** and details about his early life in part **(b)**.

In general, however, teachers appear to be covering the syllabus fully and thoroughly, giving their candidates the freedom to choose from all the questions on the paper. And many are helping their candidates to think deeply about the factual information contained in the syllabus, in order to answer the all-important last parts of questions that ask for judgements and evaluations. Successful answers to these parts can mean the difference between good results and excellent results.

Question 1

In order to gain marks, answers to this question must make precise points about the meaning of the chosen phrases in the context of the passages, and also about their importance in the wider context of Islamic belief. Thus, a good answer to phrase 1, 'There is no god but he', will say that it emphasises that there is only one God (meaning), and that this is a fundamental Islamic belief (importance), while a good answer to phrase 8, 'What is the calamity?', will identify this as referring to the end of the world (meaning), and will say that it designates a time of chaos and upset (importance). In order to gain the two full marks for each phrase, candidates must make these two points.

While a few candidates did think about the instruction in the Question and answered accordingly, many wrote answers that seemed attempts to cover as many points as possible, but without apparently thinking what the Question was asking. Their answers were good examples of the failure to stop and think before writing. A few more or less paraphrased the phrase itself without adding any comments of their own.

With regard to passage (b), which describes the visit of the angel Gabriel to Mary, a few candidates appeared to think it mentioned the Prophet Muhammad as the messenger.

Question 2

This also requires precise answers which comment on the teaching of the Hadiths about what Muslims believe and how they should act. Two clear sentences that sum up these points can gain candidates full marks.

Here, even more than in answers to **Question 1**, many candidates wrote without apparently thinking about the instructions in the question, usually making general points that more or less repeated what the Hadith was teaching, and often quoting other Hadiths with similar themes but without saying how these shed light upon the Hadith being answered. Teachers would be well advised to think hard about the way they approach teaching this topic in the syllabus, and to consider how they can gear what they say to the two aspects of this question.

There were a few favourite Hadiths, and among them (e), 'Paradise is at the feet of mothers', was attempted by nearly everyone. But it was badly answered by the great majority. Few seemed to ask themselves what it teaches about Islamic belief, or how it advises Muslims to act towards their mothers. Surely a good answer will include comments about mothers being worthy of respect because of the sacrifices they make for their children (a sizeable minority of candidates commented on this), and being a key to paradise through the early instruction they give their children.

Question 3

In part **(a)** candidates were asked to describe any four incidents from the period between 622 and 661 that show how the Prophet and Caliphs conducted relations with non-Islamic states. There were 3 marks available for each incident, indicating that candidates were expected to write on each in some detail.

Most candidates were able to think of four incidents, many choosing the Covenant of Madina, the Treaty of al-Hudaybiya, the capture of Makka, and the capture of Jerusalem. Candidates who described these incidents in full often gained high marks for this part. One small point: it should be remembered that the Covenant of Madina was not simply between the Prophet and the Jewish tribes (which many candidates seemed to assume), but in fact covered all the tribes in the oasis including the Jews, and it did not grant freedom to the Jews as much as include them among the other tribes in apparent equality. This emphasis is important to get right.

In part **(b)** candidates were asked to suggest how any two of these incidents offered models for inter-state relations today. There were some excellent suggestions here, often concerning relations between Pakistan and India, and Israel and its neighbours. Candidates made constructive suggestions on the basis of the incidents they had chosen, showing how deeply they were able to think about the significance of how the Prophet and Caliphs had acted.

The Question asked about actual incidents from this important period, but some candidates wrote about qualities of the character of the Prophet and his successors, saying how they always acted for peace, etc. This approach was not giving an answer to the question.

Question 4

This was about the Caliph 'Umar. In part **(a)** candidates were asked to describe his life (i) during the Prophet's lifetime, and (ii) during his caliphate. While there were some very thorough answers, a surprising number of candidates did not appear to have a clear idea of what distinguished 'Umar. Some thought he was one of the earliest converts, or had married two of the Prophet's daughters (that was 'Uthman). Others thought he had fought the false prophets (that was Abu Bakr), or compiled the Qur'an. Through such mistakes they missed easy marks.

Part **(b)** was more demanding, requiring candidates to know how 'Umar died, and also to suggest what this indicates about his character. A few did explain that his assassination by his slave was the result of his refusal to give his slave special concessions, which shows his unflinching fairness in treating everyone in exactly the same way (a trait that is exemplified in a great number of his actions in his earlier life). But most either did not know how he had died or failed to show how his assassination bore any significance as an indication to his character.

Question 5

While questions on the topic of the history of the Hadiths and the structure of Islamic legal thinking normally appear in Paper 1, many candidates chose this question, and a reasonable number gave full answers. Some did very well indeed and wrote excellent answers.

Part **(a)** asked about the methods of compilation used by the major collectors to ensure the Hadiths compiled were genuine. Most candidates knew about their checking of the *isnads* and *matns*, though a noticeable minority mixed these up, thinking the *matn* was the chain of transmitters and the *isnad* the body of the Hadith. Those who knew about the procedures used by the compilers sometimes gained full marks, detailing how they checked the sincerity and belief of the transmitters, and how they discarded Hadiths that did not conform to the Qur'an or reason, or that gave undue praise to a follower of the Prophet.

Part **(b)** asked about the ways in which the Qur'an and Hadiths were used in working out the Islamic law. Again, there were some excellent answers, showing how the Hadiths amplify the teachings of the Qur'an, often with examples.

Part **(c)** asked about the Sunni use of analogy. There were some good answers to this, and a few gave worked examples of how the unknown situation is linked with a known situation through the cause. This was excellent work. However, many candidates failed to note that this is accepted as the fourth source of Islamic law not the third, and some confused it with consensus.

Very few candidates attempted part **(d)**, which asked about the Shi'i use of reason in establishing law. It is unfortunate that in questions where answers of a particularly Shi'i character are explicitly invited, and also in questions where a distinctively Shi'i view can be offered, the opportunity is not taken. The Examiners will respect all accepted Islamic points of view, and hope to see more answers from Shi'i candidates in future examinations.