ISLAMIC STUDIES

| Paper 9013/01 |
| Paper 1 |

General comments

Overall, this year's performance was in-line with that of previous years. The issue of answers being in bullet points seems to have been addressed. However, there is still evidence that some candidates do not take either time to read the questions properly or are not able to manage their time efficiently to be able to cover all aspects of every question adequately. This is an essential part of the examination process and needs to be addressed.

In many papers the conclusions to the answers did not reflect the tone of the question. It is important that candidates are able to conclude their answers properly in order to wrap up the discussion adequately. This, of course, depends upon candidates' reading of the question. The conclusion needs to reflect the thrust of the question for the answer to attain top levels.

In some cases, some parts of questions were left without responses. Even though the numbers involved are not statistically significant to be a cause for concern, attention has to be drawn to it.

There has been a remarkable improvement on the subject of citing passages from the Hadith and Qur'an to support discussions. Many candidates showed a good insight into relevant references especially from the Qur'an.

Comments on specific questions

Section A

Question 1

This was one of the most popular questions and many candidates achieved the higher levels. The question needed precise answers for each of the sections with detailed information. A number of candidates were able to tackle parts **(a)** and **(b)**, but **(c)** and **(d)** proved challenging.

(a)   Most of the candidates were able to give very capable answers, showing they had studied the texts and understood what was expected.

(b)   This section was also well answered. Most candidates were able to give very informative answers with names of the main deities identified.

(c)   For this question it was important that the Hanifs were identified correctly. Some answers said they were 'idol worshippers', and this confusion affected the levels given.

(d)   It is important to read the questions carefully. This question is an example of where candidates had different understandings of what 'the wider world' referred to. Some candidates interpreted 'the wider world' to mean 'leading a worldly life' and went on to describe how wayward and frivolous the pre-Islamic Arabs were. Others understood the expression to mean 'the hereafter' and went on to discuss their disbelief in the next world. Yet others read it as 'our contemporary world' and compared the situation then and now. Candidates needed to write about the links the pre-Islamic Arabs had with other societies.

Question 2

(a)   Many candidates recalled the battles very well and hence were able to provide some good answers with the relevant dates and names of people involved.

(b)   The question is asking for a discussion of how the results of these battles helped raise the profile of the Prophet and the Muslims and how this led to improvements in their relationship with the Quraysh and the other tribes. Further, it was expecting candidates to reflect on how this also led to the heightening of Muslim belief in God and His Prophet and their adherence to Islam. This part of the question was not answered as well as the **(a)** part.

Question 3

(a)   This question was also very popular and attracted some very interesting answers. Many candidates were able to give details of Abu Bakr's reign and the activities that led to him being called 'The Saviour of Islam'. Many were able to mention points like: his eulogy at the death of the Prophet; wars against the false prophets; the apostasy wars; sending young 'Usama into battle to fulfil the wishes of the Prophet, and the collection of the Qur'an. Most of the answers addressed the salient features of the question with relevant names and activities.

(b)   The main issues for this question included: the traditional rivalry between the 'Umayyads and the Hashimites which was rekindled and, fanned by interest groups; the alleged nepotism; and the activities of Ibn Sabah who was alleged to have become a Muslim merely to cause trouble from within. As with **question 2 (b)**, this part of the question was less well done.

Section B

Question 4

For this question it was important to focus on the 'ways' the Qur'an was revealed to the Prophet. The context of revelation has a place but is not the focus. Hence, the way the experience of revelation 'affected' the Prophet's mood, personality and his general body conditions should have received greater attention. Most of those who attempted it did very well and in addition, were able to describe the latter point giving examples and statements from the Hadith as support. There were some excellent answers giving very good details.

Question 5

This question looks for a discussion on the whole concept of prophethood/messengerhood in the Qur'an, providing examples. It also demands a clear demonstration as to how the earlier prophets sent by God were all meant to lead the way to the final one, Muhammad. Candidates were expected to explain how the earlier messages were all part of the divine design and the same messages were reiterated by the Prophet Muhammad. This is why the Qur'an keeps referring to itself as a 'Reminder', and the same expression is used for the Prophet Muhammad. Prophets such as Musa, Ibraham, Da'ud, and Isa were expected to be identified and the essence of their message explained and linked to the Prophet Muhammad. Many candidates just referred to Muhammad.

Question 6

The question demands that candidates show how the Qur'an could be 'divided' into three with *Surah al-Ikhlas* covering one of them, not just a commentary on the surah. A few candidates were able to give some very interesting answers and achieved the higher levels. Some were able to divide the Qur'an into three covering: *Tawhid, Risalah* and *Akhirah.* They then drew out the main theme of the surah being Tawhid and explained the link. The core Hadith of the Prophet on the subject was also mentioned and worked into the discussion of some answers. Another group of candidates made the division as: *Tawhid, Risalah* and *Mua'malat* and hence used this to explain how the surah could be considered as a third of the Qur'an.

Section C

Question 7

This, again, was among the very popular questions and many candidates who attempted it did very well. The question asks for a discussion of each of the Five Pillars of Islam explaining how they enable a believer to have a closer relationship with God. The key is to look at the issue of obedience and how this enables the observance of each of the pillars to lead to the pleasure of God and hence a more positive relationship. Many answers did not touch on the issue of obedience adequately. Some merely described the Five Pillars without linking their discussion to how one is brought close to God. For *Salat*, candidates could have pointed out the effect of s*ujjud* on one's relationship with God and saying the *talbiyyah* during *Hajj*.

Question 8

(a)   This question asks for a description of how the *Jum'ah* prayers and *'Id al-Adha* are celebrated. The description is expected to be precise and accurate. Many candidates gave basic information about both without going into details. Many candidates pointed out that women were prohibited from the *Jum'ah* prayers and the prayers of *'Id al- Adha* as well. It seems because in many Muslim cultures women do not routinely pray in the mosque, this was reflected in many answers. Very often, the descriptions were simplistic without much detail. Candidates could have included: the rationale behind the two *rakaat* for *Jum'ah* prayers instead of the normal four for *Dhuhr;* the essence of the *Khutbah;* the timing for the *Khutbah* and so on.

(b)   Here, answers could have included the origins of the celebration, its connection to Ibrahim and his son Isma'il and also with *Hajj*. Comments on, for example, the celebration showing obedience to the command of God, the universality of the Islamic message, the show of unity, and joy for the poor and the needy, with references from the Qur'an in support, were expected.

Question 9

This was one of the least popular questions.

(a)   Many interpreted 'earlier revelations' to mean revelations to the Prophet Muhammad in Makkah as against those revealed in Madinah. This understanding, in some cases, had an effect on **part (b)**. The question is asking candidates to identify the main revelations given before the Qur'an and explain how they functioned as signs for the eventual advent of the Prophet Muhammad and the Qur'an. Candidates could mention Ibrahim's *Suhuf,* Da'ud's *Zabur*, Musa's *Torah* and Isa's *Injil.* Reference to the way the Qur'an calls itself to agree with this understanding was expected for the higher levels. Expressions such as 'Reminder' (*Dhikr*) and confirmation of what has already been given (*Musaddiqa lima bayna yadayhi*) fit into this description.

(b)   In this part, the effect of the wrong reading of part (a) was very clear. For many therefore they were describing the Qur'an and what it means to Muslims. It was expected that candidates would describe the character, specific traits and functions of these earlier revelations within their communities leading on to the finality of the Prophet and the Qur'an. For the highest levels it was expected that answers might suggest that since all these revelations came from the same source, God, they attested to the same divine truth.

Section D

Question 10

This question was not very popular.

(a)   The question asks for a descriptive account of what *ijtihad* is and how it works in practice giving examples to support the answer. The answer could then have moved on to comment about the essential qualifications of a *mujtahid,* the main sources of his/her deliberations and the circumstances within which he/she exercises this role in the legal context. Candidates could also have written about situations in which *ijtihad* becomes necessary and the limitations in exercising it. Excellent answers could have included the call for *ijtihad* in various parts of the Muslim world and how appropriate these calls are.

(b)   This part demands an evaluation of the whole institution of *ijtihad* and explaining why some people question its efficacy in Muslim legal matters. Candidates could have written about possible subjectivity, partiality, influence by the environment and inconsistencies with the revealed texts, leading to disunity in the Muslim world. Excellent candidates could raise the issue of the applicability of the Qur'an and Sunnah in new situations and the danger of unqualified people seeing themselves as experts and distorting the message of Islam.

Question 11

Many candidates found it difficult to give an adequate description of what the Sunnah is and how it is used in establishing legal teachings. The question expects candidates to give a good account of the role of the Sunnah in legal practice as a means of interpreting the teachings of the Qur'an. Many of those who attempted this question gave basic examples on day to day practicalities of Islam especially with regard to how the Sunnah enables a Muslim to understand fully how these are to be carried out. However, the question expects candidates to go beyond these simple examples and look at real legal issues such as inheritance, marriage and divorce, relationships with other people/faiths, financial transactions, and war and peace. To reach the higher levels candidates needed to write a comprehensive discussion on the Sunnah as the model for Muslims to follow with Qur'anic passages in support.

Question 12

This question allowed candidates to be 'creative'. It is the level of 'creativity' and not necessarily the real historical experiences that enabled candidates to reach the higher levels. Candidates were thus expected to stick to the line of the question and raise four examples and discuss them fully. Many candidates gave very general answers without specifying to whom they refer as the question demands.

ISLAMIC STUDIES

| Paper 9013/02 |
| Paper 2 |

General comments

The general standard of answers was very good this year. Candidates have developed their skills in analysing and evaluating questions and there was a noticeable improvement in this from previous years.

The very best responses demonstrated improved introductions and conclusions in their essays. The best introductions defined key words in the question, referred back to them in every paragraph as their argument developed, then ensured that different lines of argument were evaluated in the conclusion. Excellent answers challenged the question.

Time keeping was good and the vast majority of candidates followed the rubric and completed answering the correct number of questions.

Comments on specific questions

Section A

Question 1

This question was generally very well answered. Some candidates chose to concentrate on one Caliph and give reasons why that person was the greatest. Others chose to explain the achievements for one Caliph then explained the second and finally added a conclusion, comparing the two, which showed evidence of deeper thought. A small number of candidates took a thematic approach and went through various areas such as foreign campaigns and compared the two Caliphs' approaches within each paragraph about the theme. Knowledge was generally very good and well expressed on this topic. To improve their answers candidates could have included a concluding paragraph which evaluated the differences between the achievements of the two Caliphs, and recognised that there are some points in favour of each before reaching a conclusion. Weaker responses tended to only mention the achievements of one Caliph and conclude that everything they did was good and therefore everything the other did was poor.

Question 2

The best responses gave clear definitions of what un-Islamic meant or explored this as they analysed different aspects of Umayyad rule. Some excellent responses challenged the question and stated that despite the criticisms the Umayyad period did contribute some positive aspects including renowned mosques with splendid architecture. Also, the reign of Umar II was famous for his piety. More limited answers focused on the rebellions of the Shi'i and their treatment which gave rise to later criticisms without balancing this with any of the positive points.

Question 3

Few candidates chose to answer this question. Of those who did the best answers considered both 'Abbasid strengths and Umayyad weaknesses and evaluated the balance of each. Weaker responses only mentioned one or two factors which led to the demise of the Umayyads and gave a simple explanation of this.

Section B

Question 4

This question was generally very well answered. The best answers identified the two legal experts and gave outlines of their legal methods. Candidates recognised that Malik's understanding of Sunnah was as the practice of the Muslims of Medina, and al-Shafi'i's understanding of it as the practice of the Prophet alone. The very best responses showed appreciation of the advantages and disadvantages of both understandings.

Question 5

For part **(a)** some candidates were able to write concise and accurate answers which focused on the *matn*, the subject of the Hadith. The *isnad* or chain of transmitters was not the focus of this question. This question was generally not well answered; most candidates gave only basic responses.

For part **(b)** answers were generally much better and included early years of transmission and reference to known 8th and 9th century collections such Ahmed ibn Hanbal.

Whilst the general level was good, there was a paucity of responses at the highest levels of response; something that could be improved with more detail and citation of examples from the collections.

Question 6

Few candidates answered this question but those who did generally gave satisfactory and good responses. Good answers mentioned al-Ash'ari and his place in Islamic theological history. They commented about his 'conversion' from Mu'tazilism to traditional Islam, and the reasons why. More detailed discussions considered his rational methods in defeating the Mu'tazilah and defending traditional beliefs. Good responses had a strong grasp of Mu'tazilite beliefs and where they fell outside the pale of traditional Islam and explained these analytically. Weaker responses tended to offer a limited view of only one or two of the differences and did not grasp the significance of this division.

Section C

Question 7

(a)   Most candidates were able to give good, detailed accounts of the massacre at Karbala, and the best responses went on to reflect on this in Shi'i development, particularly on the importance of the sacrificial death.

(b)   Candidates generally wrote very good answers to this question. Responses included the role of the Imam in interpreting text to the community and their infallibility. Some explained the role in terms of the social leadership. Nearly all mentioned the importance of being from the line of 'Ali and the future events predicted.

Question 8

Few candidates chose to answer this question but of those who did most responses were either good or excellent. Features of excellent answers included a discussion of how it was perceived that al-Hallaj had overstepped the boundaries of *tawhid* and verged on pantheism. Candidates also set the historical context of Sufism in this regard.

Question 9

Features of good answers considered similarities such as the concern to explore the nature of the world and the activity of the Creator in it, the relationship between the created order and the Creator, the character of the Creator, the character of the human individual, correct moral outlook and action, not just the differences. Most answers, however, did not reach this level and addressed general basic ideas about the difference between ancient Greek thinkers and Muslims and viewed these as opposites.

Section D

Question 10

This proved a popular question and was reasonably well answered, and there were a few excellent answers. To improve answers candidates could have quoted specific verses from the Qur'an and been careful to differentiate between the Qur'an and the Hadith. Evaluative answers then went on to say how far the Qur'an itself gave a basis for relations with those of other religions and how far other sources such as Hadith were needed to complement this. Careful attention to the words in the question would help candidates to pin down the requirements of this question and address it in such a way as to enable them to achieve the higher levels of response.

Question 11

This proved a very popular question and again the key to good answers was that they addressed the exact wording of the question and quoted or referenced specific verses from the Qur'an, taking care to differentiate these from the Hadith and general teachings. The very best answers saw the Qur'an in the context of the time, comparing its message to the state of *jahiliyyah*, and referred in part **b** to different, often contrasting Muslim societies from different parts of the world. This gave depth to answers. Most answers, though good, did not quite reach this higher level of response. More basic responses saw the question in simplistic terms and only referred to general teachings from the Qur'an and one modern day society.

Question 12

Fewer candidates attempted this question. Responses included focus on charity, neighbourliness and principles from Islamic ethics which could be applied to good community relations. Some candidates also referred to principles of interaction with those of other faiths in the Median community. To reach the highest levels candidates needed to refer to a range of examples.