

ISLAMIC STUDIES

Paper 9013/12
Paper 1

Key messages

The standards were comparable to previous years.

Focus on what is required in the question, description or explanation or discussion.

Add personal judgements in response to statements to conclude discussions, where relevant.

General comments

The standard of this year's paper was comparable to previous years. Candidates chose different questions to respond to with some more popular than others but broadly well spread across the entire paper. Candidates are required to answer five questions in total: one from each of the four sections then a fifth from any section. Most did this but some answered only four questions, putting them at a considerable disadvantage.

The best responses focused clearly on the specific question asked, rather than writing about the topic in general. A typical excellent answer began with an introductory paragraph, defining any terms or words used in the question and setting out how the candidate would be answering in their following paragraphs. Candidates achieved higher marks when they responded to what was asked in terms of description, explanation or discussion. For questions about description of knowledge, facts and details are important. For explanation, explaining why, the importance or significance, should be the focus of responses. Some candidates only added a few words of explanation to descriptions which were otherwise quite good.

Responses should be in prose, not bullet points, and organised in paragraphs. The main thing to express is that each paragraph should have a clear subject linked to the question. Some candidates chose to write in this way and begin each paragraph with their point then back it up with details and information. This style of writing was very effective. There are other possible ways of writing and there is no one perfect way to achieve a high mark. Generally, candidates should practice their essay writing skills and ensure they focus more on specific questions asked.

Other features of good answers include the occasional quote and reference to a book or scholar that the candidate has read. These may be added where relevant, and whilst it is not necessary to add many, a few here and there can make an answer that little bit more advanced and so achieve a higher mark.

Comments on specific questions

Section A

Question 1

This was a popular question which many candidates answered well. Some candidates chose to define four practices and cover each separately, in four parts, whereas others wrote more generally. Practices cited ranged widely and included the worship of idols and the conduct of pilgrimage and *tawaf* around the Ka'ba in Mecca. Other practices included those linked with religion which also had a social element. Religious practices of the Hanifs and believers in God from the monotheistic traditions surviving in Mecca during Muhammad's early life were also mentioned by some. Good answers described these and gave details for each practice chosen.

Explanations included the reasons why idolatry was defined as unacceptable and challenged by Muhammad (pbuh). Good answers referred to Muhammad's speeches through Hadith and quotations from parts of the Qur'an revealed in order to help the Prophet (pbuh) challenge the unacceptable beliefs of the idol worshippers at the time. Explanations of how Muhammad (pbuh) revised these practices required identification of revisions which were not simply replacements with new practices. For example, the circling of the Ka'ba was retained but revised in line with Islamic teachings, according to revelations given by God and the examples set by Muhammad (pbuh). The best answers drew out these features. Weaker answers did not distinguish these carefully and wrote in general about changes.

Question 2

This question was well answered. The best responses first defined what was meant by prophet and what was meant by statesman. The role of prophet included giving a message to humankind by God, warning against idolatry and wrongdoing and setting a perfect example for Muslims to follow. The role of statesman could overlap with this but also involved the political leadership of Medina, the leadership of all members of the community including those who were resident in Medina and the emigrants, as well as the different tribes and those of different religions. References to the Constitution or Charter of Medina guaranteeing protection of others made for a good answer. Muhammad's leadership in activities to protect the city of Medina, including peace treaties as well as battles, was also relevant provided they were linked specifically to his statesmanship. Weaker responses tended to write about the events rather than extract the key information from them that linked to the Prophet's character in these areas. This shows why it is important to read and address the specific terms in the question, and engage critically with them, in order to achieve a higher level of response.

Question 3

The first part of this response refers to the character of Abu Bakr. Candidates gave differing responses, sometimes writing in general about his good character. Some wrote about a specific incident when the Prophet (pbuh) told Abu Bakr about the revelation he received, and Abu Bakr accepted this straight away without question. The Prophet (pbuh) commented on this and how Abu Bakr had faith that was so strong that he was not shaken by anything, and it is from this that the title al-Saddiq came. Abu Bakr's testimony to the truth of the religion of Islam, and his upright and good character, also lead him to be known as the truthful one, which is a way of translating al-Saddiq. Some candidates wrote about events in Abu Bakr's Caliphate which demonstrated his good character, which could be made relevant if connected to the title al-Saddiq and given explanation.

In **part (b)** candidates were more confident and gave detailed responses about the situation which arose from the death of 'Uthman and progressed throughout the Caliphate of 'Ali. The best answers were clear about explaining why this took place, tracing the origins of this first *fitnah* or dispute within the Islamic community and analysing the deeper causes.

Section B

Question 4

- (a) This was a popular choice of question and very well answered. It was not necessary to cover all three in the same amount of detail as most had less to say about the role of Hafsa. Good responses detailed the steps Zayd ibn Thabit went to in order to compile the Qur'an, from the time when Abu Bakr agreed to its written compilation onwards, ending with 'Uthman's orders to destroy all errant versions. Very good responses included details of the checking and verification process during the period of compilation.
- (b) There were some interesting responses to this. Some mentioned accounts about the checking process, the evidence being the accounts of this, to verify that this took place and that the surviving *huffaz* who had memorised the Qur'an by heart were involved. A few candidates mentioned the consistency of early manuscripts of the Qur'an as evidence, and the importance of oral tradition at the time which suggested that it would have been transmitted with care and accuracy. The relatively short time period and involvement of contemporaries of the Prophet (pbuh) was also mentioned. One candidate wrote that ultimately it was not a matter of evidence, it was a position of faith that the Qur'an as possessed by the early Muslim community was the same as the one received by Muhammad (pbuh), and something which Muslims would not question.

Question 5

Few candidates chose this question, but those who did gave very good responses overall. Candidates quoted the Surah, in many cases the whole Surah, as this is a short one, and explained the importance of each line. Most focused on the importance of the core Islamic beliefs: *tawhid*, the oneness of God, which is clearly explained in this Surah. Since *tawhid*, along with *risalah* (the belief in messengers) and *akhirah* (the belief in judgement and life after death) formed three key Islamic beliefs emphasised in the Prophet's preaching and in the Meccan revelations, it is logical that these form the focus of Muslim belief and this Surah sums them up. Excellent responses provided evidence to show that the Surah is indeed a summary of this key belief by referencing where it is further elaborated throughout the Qur'an.

Question 6

Very few candidates chose this question. The passages in the syllabus include Surah al-Baqarah 2:1 – 193 which refers to Adam, Musa and Isa as well as Ibrahim and his family. This is a long and detailed passage from which candidates could extract much detail about the role of prophets and their missions. Good answers made some quotations and explained how they linked to the theme of prophethood. God always helps his prophets through times of difficulty and the prophets have patience and trust in God. Surah Al 'Imran 3:35 – 62 refers to the virgin birth of Isa and his mission. Surah al-Anbiya 21:50 – 112 refers to the lineage of prophets and their witness to the truth in various situations. Surah al-Qasas 28:1 – 44 tells the story of Musa and his leadership of the people to escape from Pharaoh in Egypt. Surah al-Duha 93 was revealed to comfort Muhammad (pbuh) after a gap in the revelations, and the other short passages set for study could be used to explain aspects of Islamic belief and how they related to the mission of Muhammad (pbuh).

Section C

Question 7

This was a very popular question and very well answered. Candidates were confident in detailing the Five Pillars and explaining how each one, in turn, linked a Muslim more closely with God. Good responses also added two or three quotations of teachings behind the Five Pillars to explain how they linked to God. Some added personal reflections. For example, how *salah*, prayer, involved prostration, and how this position was deeply spiritual one in which a Muslim might feel in complete devotion and obedience to the unseen God before them. Paying *zakat* helped Muslims feel humility before God and reminded them that God provides all and it is a test from God to pay *zakat* to help those in need. Most candidates gave other examples from *sawm*, fasting, and *hajj*, pilgrimage, to complete each of the Five Pillars in detail.

Question 8

Responses to this question varied. Candidates were stronger on the social aspects of 'Id than the religious ones. Observances could include all the traditions associated with 'Id prayers, including Sunnah traditions such as getting up early, wearing new or clean clothes, taking a longer route to a larger mosque or praying in congregation outdoors. The content of the prayers, *takbir* salutations, sermon, *fitrah* donations and joyful greetings were all relevant parts of answers to be included. Some mentioned *du'as* at graves as well as aspects of giving money to children and family celebrations.

Part (b) was better answered with explanations given about how the larger *jamaat* congregation in prayer and greetings helped to unite Muslims of whatever background they came from, brining the community closer together. The charity payments and sharing of meat to those in need helped to make a connection between the haves and have nots, as well as shared family meals.

Question 9

Candidates handled this question well and made links between the belief and the conduct of Muslims in everyday life. All commented that fear and hope had a role: Muslims feared judgement might lead to hell, which helped to guide them away from immorality, fearing the angels were watching them and recording their deeds. Hope of eternal life in paradise, and the belief in predestination leading up to judgement, gives Muslims confidence in their faith to practice daily prayers and encourage others in their faith and practice. Various personal responses were added to explain how the belief affected Muslims in their everyday practice, which helped to build up original responses.

Section D

Question 10

Few candidates chose this question. Best responses named a couple of commentaries. The reasons suggested for the need for many commentaries included the times Muslims lived in and the new issues arising. Another reason was the need for commentaries in a local language, as Islam spread far and wide and Muslims no longer knew the meaning of Arabic in many places. Some identified different schools of thought and as sects grew up, more commentaries arose. Esoteric commentaries, focusing on the inner meaning of the Qur'an, were developed especially by those with Sufi inclinations. Those with Islamist and reformist interests in modern times preferred different versions again. Understanding the different theological perspectives of Muslims helped to understand the diversity and variety of schools of thought and hence the number of different Qur'an commentaries.

Question 11

This was a popular question and well answered. Most referred to the Qur'anic command to pray and the details of how and when to pray given from the Sunnah. The best answers were able to show this with quotations from both sources. Other examples from the Five Pillars or other aspects of Islamic practice were given to develop answers further. The best answers concluded that both message (the Qur'an) and messenger (Muhammad (pbuh)) were following the will of God and this unity in the source of the message meant that God's plan would ensure harmony between the two.

Question 12

This proved challenging to the few who answered this question. Most wrote that the Shari'ah is central because it provides a framework which is God-centred and so legitimate in the eyes of Muslims, in any age. This was qualified by the need to gain the views of scholars, through *ijma*, and use of analogy, *qiyas*, to find answers to modern questions not covered in traditional Shari'ah rulings. A distinction can be made between the rulings themselves, which might be more applicable to different time periods, and the process of deriving the rulings, based on Shari'ah, which could be said to be divinely inspired and relevant today. Many responses discussed specific aspects such as religious practices and Shari'ah, considered just as relevant today, and matters of criminal law, considered less relevant in some parts of the world but still relevant in a few. A personal judgement in conclusion focusing on the word 'central' and applying this to the lives of Muslims today, made for a very good answer.

ISLAMIC STUDIES

Paper 9013/22
Paper 2

Key messages

All five answers should be attempted to gain maximum marks, one from each of the four sections and the last one from any section.

General comments

The general standard was comparable to last year. A full range of candidate responses was observed, covering all the questions set. Good and very good responses focused specifically on the question set. They engaged with it, defining and discussing key terms, and skilfully deployed facts and evidence to support their answers. The focus of the answers was structured according to the explanation or discussion made, first and foremost, and the facts deployed to support this. Weaker answers wrote about the topic in general and were organised around information, with less engagement with the key terms in the question.

Comments on specific questions

Section A

Question 1

- (a) This question was well answered. Candidates were familiar with the events and able to describe them in detail. Weaker answers gave outlines focusing on one or two events whereas stronger answers were comprehensive in their coverage of events at this time.
- (b) The focus here was explanation, rather than the facts about the changeover. Some excellent answers drew out trends from the Umayyad's which continued under the 'Abbasids and concluded that this meant the change could take place relatively smoothly.

Question 2

The key point of this question was to discuss the changes in the position and power of the 'Abbasid Caliphs after a century of the 'Abbasids coming to power. It was possible to argue that personal power continued in various ways, thereby disagreeing; that it diminished quickly, thereby agreeing with the statement; or take a middle view and argue that in some ways it diminished but it was different for different Caliphs and in different ways. The best responses focused on this change at the heart of their discussions.

Question 3

There were not many responses to this question, but those who did responded well. Candidates offered details about how the early 'Abbasids built up the state and consolidated their power. The best answers took an analytical view and compared the key events under different Caliphs, enabling higher levels of response to be reached by demonstrating a degree of critical judgement. It was acceptable to choose one Caliph, or more than one if the candidate considered them equal, provided the contribution to building up the 'Abbasids' power was highlighted in the answer.

Section B

Question 4

- (a) Few candidates chose this question. Many candidates listed the methods used by each. A different approach was to focus on methods, one at a time, starting with the use of the Qur'an, then compare the ways each school of thought used it. Better answers highlighted the differences, with some challenging the question and claiming the differences were small.
- (b) Candidates attempted to explain the parts of Hanbali *fiqh* which are distinct. Some questioned the extent to which Ibn Hanbal actually 'rejected' methods or just chose his own approach whilst respecting the others. That made for interesting and individual answers.

Question 5

This question was well answered. Candidates were able to explain in detail the methods each used to ensure the reliability of Hadith, including reference to the *isnad*, the chain of narrators, and the *matn*, the content of the Hadith. Excellent responses then developed their explanations to show how these provided evidence to make the collections more reliable than those which might contain a weakness in the chain or content, giving examples.

Question 6

This question was popular and reasonably well answered. Better answers focused on the teachings rather than the background of the founders of these theological movements. It was not essential to cover all of the religious teachings, although many candidates did. The best answers stressed the differences and organised their discussions that way, with a concluding paragraph making an assessment about how significant the candidate considered those differences.

Section C

Question 7

This was reasonably well answered. Many distinguished between the Sunni Caliph as generally elected on the basis of knowledge and piety, as compared to the Shi'i Imam who should be within the family of Ahl-al-Bayt, the family of the Prophet (pbuh), and is thought to be able to interpret the Qur'an without error, thereby producing guidance for Shi'i Muslims which is considered a duty to follow and obey. Some candidates wrote about their consideration of the position of Shi'i Imams according to other Islamic perspectives which are critical. Different perspectives such as these can add to an answer, with the qualification that it should be explained what perspective is being taken.

Question 8

Good answers focused on the first few centuries of Islam, whereas weaker answers talked in general about Sufi practices. Very good answers mentioned figures such as al-Hallaj, who through his deeper Sufi meditation spoke as if he had connected with God in union and was pronounced a heretic for what he said. One candidate challenged the question and made the point that even in the first few centuries of Islam, there were many Sufis who contributed to the faith, and it depends what definition of Sufism is taken as to whether it is opposed. Challenging the question in discussion is a perfectly acceptable way to answer and, in many cases, leads to an excellent response.

Question 9

Few candidates chose this question. Those who did made reasonable attempts to answer. Candidates explained al-Ghazali's personal journey away from philosophy and towards traditional Islamic theology, particularly Sufism. The best answers focused on the theology and justification for reasoning, rather than the personality of al-Ghazali. They mentioned that revelation was seen as superior to the reasoning of philosophers, which might lead to doubt.

Section D

Question 10

The most popular choice was Sayyid Ahmed Khan, with candidates arguing that he was influential both in his writings about Islam specifically as well as his contribution to the development of the 'Two Nation theory' which influenced the creation of Pakistan as a nation and homeland for Muslims of South Asia. His contribution in setting up the Aligarh seminary for training Imams was mentioned as particularly significant. Good answers explained the significance of the actions taken by the chosen individual and sometimes compared their significance to others.

Question 11

- (a) Many candidates wrote in general about the relationship between Islam and other faiths, without distinguishing between different Islamic sources. Best responses identified teachings specifically from the Qur'an. Excellent responses were able to include brief quotations from the Qur'an and explain what they mean in terms of guidance for Muslims and their relationships with those of other faiths. Differences of perspective could also be extrapolated from different interpretations of the Qur'an and mentioned in a very good answer.
- (b) This question was interpreted in different ways: living alongside those of other faiths as a minority community as well as those living in predominantly non-Muslim countries. Good answers considered issues of tolerance, *dawah* (mission) and rights to freedom of worship. Many considered problems of Muslims living alongside others in terms of fulfilling Islamic requirements to pray and fast at certain times, but also saw these as opportunities to interact with others and perform *dawah* to explain aspects of Islam.

Question 12

- (a) A whole range of challenges were identified. Many focused on difficulties performing prayer on time whilst working in a non-Muslim majority country; taking time off to celebrate festivals; fasting whilst others around are eating and so on. Some looked at social issues; discrimination and how to achieve equal rights to employment as well as considering the challenge of what constitutes *halal* and *haram* environments for work. Some candidates wrote that it was a test of faith from which Muslims could come out challenged but stronger.
- (b) Most candidates extracted aspects of tolerance exhibited by the Companions of the Prophet (pbuh), especially the four Rightly Guided Caliphs. Some focused on the first generation of Muslims in Mecca, subjected to opposition by the Quraish, explaining that they were very patient to explain their faith and focused on God in all circumstances, however difficult. Other candidates focused on the contribution of the first Muslim generation in their country in settling and interacting with the society they moved into, which were valid responses.