

ISLAMIC RELIGION AND CULTURE

Paper 2056/01

Paper 1

General comments

The overall performance of the candidates was fair. Knowledge and understanding in presenting facts has improved. The ability to comment upon given facts needs to be encouraged.

It is suggested that teachers and candidates look at Islam in a much broader context. Candidates are advised to look positively at the faith rather than focussing on those who do not believe and how they will be judged. Examiners report they are often left with an impression that candidates are unable to demonstrate an appreciation of Islam as a way of life.

Candidates need to spend more time thinking about the answer rather than wasting valuable time writing out the question or making detailed plans before actually answering. It is advisable to read both **parts (a) and (b)** of a question to avoid repetition and confusion. Points made for **part (a)** were often written in **part (b)**, and therefore not credited. Many candidates wrote too much extraneous material in their answers.

Questions 1, 2, 3, 7, 10 and **11** were the most popular questions. Candidates found **Questions 5, 6, 8(b), 9(b)** and **12** most challenging.

Comments on specific questions

Section A

Question 1

- (a) As in previous years the performance on this question was disappointing. The vast majority of candidates only gained 3 or 4 marks. Three points were made constantly: drinking/gambling, women and female infanticide. Some candidates wrote two full pages to achieve these few marks. There was hardly any mention of the prevailing tribal system.
- (b) This part was better than **part (a)** though most only listed religious practices at that time. Some candidates seemed to think that religious beliefs were not important to the Arabs before Islam. Although the status of the Kaaba in Mecca was paramount there were shrines at other locations as well. Few made the point that the importance of the pagan beliefs most Arabs held was the reason for the opposition to the Prophet's message.

Question 2

- (a) Both **(i)** and **(ii)** were well answered. In **(iii)** some candidates thought this happened after the Prophet had received the first revelation. A large number of candidates gained full marks here.
- (b) Some answers showed little understanding of how events and character traits evident in Muhammad's (pbuh) early life might be beneficial to his life as a prophet. Most answers mentioned various episodes in his life but were unable to make any connection of how these prepared him for the future.

Question 3

- (a) There was an overall satisfactory performance on this question. Weak candidates managed to outline only two points: persecution in Mecca and the plot to kill the Prophet. There was little mention of the Prophet encouraging early Muslims to migrate to Abyssinia and Medina to avoid persecution.

- (b) Some reasonable answers here but again not enough development to get full marks.

Question 4

- (a) This was the best answered question on the paper, being a well-known event. There were some excellent answers.
- (b) This question appeared to be too subtle for most. Some gave information that should have been in **part (a)** about what actually happened in the battle that caused the defeat. Some saw only a defeat. However, a few candidates did show understanding of the interpretations given in the mark scheme. As in many of the **part (b)** questions the performance never matched that in **part (a)**.

Question 5

- (a) This question was not a popular choice. Never the less some candidates did attempt to answer it. It seems that the concept of brotherhood that the Prophet initiated in Medina needs to be understood more fully than was apparent in the answers.
- (b) Candidates who got marks on **part (a)** had difficulty in understanding what was being asked here. There was much repetition of what had been written already in **part (a)**. In essence the community that was being established by the Prophet in Medina covered many aspects of religious and communal life, and was unique in nature.

Question 6

- (a) There was some confusion in answers given here. Some candidates wrote about the achievements of Umar rather than Uthman.
- (b) This was actually better answered than (a) with candidates showing some awareness of Uthman's character. Weaker candidates only mentioned the reasons for his assassination.

Section B

Question 7

- (a) This was a popular question and generally well answered.
- (b) Most candidates made a good attempt at answering this. It was probably the best overall performance of a **part (b)** question. Good answers were those that focused on the farsightedness of early Muslims who thought of the generations of Muslims to come and therefore undertook the task of compiling the Qur'an.

Question 8

- (a) Surprisingly there were many inaccuracies in these answers. Candidates were asked about the main teachings of Sura Fateha not just the translation (although the words in translation were not known either). However there were a few excellent answers. Weak candidates thought every line was about the oneness of Allah.
- (b) Those who could answer (a) also made a competent attempt at (b) and showed a good understanding of the nature of the Sura and its importance. Many candidates were able to show some valid points of understanding.

Question 9

- (a) Few candidates attempted this question. There were some satisfactory answers. Weak candidates did not read the question properly and talked about the birth of Musa instead.
- (b) This part had few relevant answers. Candidates need to think of the lives of the prophets and caliphs mentioned in the syllabus and what they can learn from them.

Question 10

- (a) This was a popular question though some candidates were confused about what 'observances' meant. Few mentioned 'niyyat' before fasting or the 'dua' said at Iftar. Many candidates specifically mentioned fasting as not being recommended for those who are insane. This condition comes under the category of those who are ill and therefore need not fast. Five daily prayers are said every day not just during Ramadan.
- (b) The answers in this part were varied. Some candidates suggested if Muslims fast, Allah forgives them. Others suggested Muslims should pray during this special month. Candidates are reminded it takes more than just fasting for Allah to forgive. Weak answers were vague.

Question 11

- (a) In this question candidates were specifically asked to be brief. Each pillar of Islam would have 2 marks. Candidates needed to be aware of this and answer accordingly. Some confusion was noted between 'Tauhid' and the 'Shahadah'. Often there was mentioned of the Prophet as the 'last messenger in the Shahadah. Muslims say their prayers to get close to Allah and be better human beings rather than pray only because they fear His punishment. There was some confusion about what Hajj really is. For some candidates Hajj was going to Mecca rather than the 'wuquf' at Arafat (without which Hajj is invalid). Once again the common fault was vagueness when a short straightforward description would have gained them two marks for each.
- (b) Candidates were specifically asked to write about one pillar of Islam and how important it was in his/her life. Many wrote in the third person which limited their performance on this question as a whole. Those who made their answers personal were given credit.

Question 12

- (a) Only a few attempted this question. It seemed candidates were not too familiar with the Hadith in the syllabus.
- (b) This was more general than **part (a)** but here too the answers were weak. Candidates did not have a clear idea of the differences between the Qur'an and the Hadith.