

ISLAMIYAT

Paper 2058/01

Paper 1

General comments

It was clear from both papers in this examination that the great majority of candidates had been thoroughly drilled in the main points of the syllabus, and that many of them had been shown how to approach questions and how to use their time to the best effect. Some very high marks were achieved by candidates who evidently not only knew the factual information expected by the syllabus but also knew the whole subject so well that they were able to apply their knowledge in new ways to give insightful and interesting answers where requested. They and their teachers should be congratulated for their application to their work and their dedication to what they have learnt.

There were no signs that candidates found the time allowed for either paper too short. In fact, many of them appeared to have enough time to go over their answers and make changes or add further points.

A number of familiar tendencies were evident in the papers from some Centres. Chief among these was the failure to read questions properly or to answer what they were asking. This is a simple matter, but candidates repeatedly did not answer what a question asked, and so they did not pick up marks which they might easily have gained if they had read it, thought about the instructions it contained, re-read it and then spent a few moments planning their answer.

Connected with this tendency not to read questions is the clear tendency to 'question-spot' and give pre-learned answers. While it is understandable that in the anxiety of the lead-up to an examination, both candidates and teachers might want to make the best attempt to predict what the papers will contain, it can be a sad waste of time and energy if a candidate learns an answer based on a previous examination and then gives it irrespective of what the question being attempted asks.

There is no better way to succeed in this examination than to know the syllabus well and to come to the paper with a fresh mind ready to read the questions, think about them and plan a full answer. There are clear signs that many candidates do this, and it would be good to see it followed as a general rule.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

This question was on the main teachings contained in two of three set passages from the Qur'an. It did not ask for a summary of the passages or for a verse-by-verse interpretation. Good answers showed how a candidate had thought about the main Qur'anic theme that is exemplified in the passage and had written on this.

The Mark Scheme allowed marks for basic factual points in the passages (to give encouragement to candidates of all abilities), and also marks for more advanced points that indicated a candidate knew something about the main theme the passage contained (to enable the best candidates to distinguish themselves). For example, with regard to passage (a), Sura 8.44-5, one mark was allowed for a comment about the Battle of Badr, but candidates could only gain more marks by explaining how this event is portrayed in terms of God's total control of events (one further mark), how this is shown by his making the Quraysh appear fewer to encourage the Muslims and the Muslims appear helpless to make the Quraysh feel over-confident (one further mark), and how this gives Muslims a lesson to rely upon God in all circumstances (one further mark). It can be seen that in order to do well candidates have to think about the significance of the teachings in passage and not merely write about its contents.

While there were a few good answers, many tended to be summaries or commentaries of the passages, particularly of the annunciation to Mary of the birth of Jesus. Common mistakes elsewhere included in (a)

not naming the battle as Badr, not realising that each side was made to appear as small to the other; in (b) not identifying Jesus's birth as a miracle, identifying Mary's son as Moses and sometimes Muhammad; in (c) not seeing God as a refuge from everything the world might threaten.

Question 2

This asked about the difficulties encountered by the Prophet and his followers while they lived in Makka, and how their reaction can provide lessons for Muslims today.

In part **(a)** candidates were asked for accurate accounts of the personal difficulties of the Prophet, including the insults and abuses he suffered in Makka and al-Ta'if, the boycott, and the problems presented by the deaths of Abu Talib and Khadija; and also for equally detailed accounts of the difficulties faced by the first Muslims, including the tortures inflicted on some of them, the difficulty of worshipping in public and the necessity to flee to Abyssinia.

Many candidates gave full accounts, and this tended to be a high-scoring question. Inaccuracies seen in some papers were that the Prophet was stoned until his shoes filled with blood while in Makka not al-Ta'if, that he himself took part in the flight to Abyssinia, and that during the boycott the Muslims took refuge in the cave of Thawr (which is where the Prophet and Abu Bakr hid during their migration to Madina).

Part **(b)** was more demanding, asking candidates to reflect on the facts given in part **(a)** and to make a connection between the response of the early Muslims to their difficulties and Muslims today. Good answers would have referred to the first Muslims' steadfastness and refusal to abandon their faith, the dignity they maintained, their unfailing loyalty towards one another, and the concern shown by the Prophet himself for his persecutors. The best answers would have gone on to add comments about the lessons these reactions can teach Muslims now.

A shortcoming seen in some answers to this part was that they gave general comments about Muslim behaviour without connecting these to the conduct of the Prophet and his first followers. Candidates who gave answers such as these had clearly not thought about the Question.

Question 3

This was popular with some Centres, and in general it was well answered. Part **(a)** asked for descriptive answers about the main beliefs concerning the line of prophets, and part **(b)** asked about the meaning of the second part of the Declaration of Faith.

Good answers to part **(a)** would have detailed the main characteristics of the prophets, such as their humanity and sinlessness, their being chosen by God, being sent to particular communities, and being given particular scriptures. Marks were given for naming some of the best known prophets and the scriptures they delivered.

The candidates who answered this part usually gave full answers, and included most of the relevant points. This kind of question, that may seem easy and straightforward, requires accuracy in describing and care in ensuring the main points are included. Candidates should always take time to plan their answers because they risk not gaining relatively easy marks if they do not include the main points.

Good answers to the less straightforward part **(b)** would have related the Prophet to the line of messengers before him, as one of the line but also its end and climax, and would have commented on the universality of his message and its continuing relevance today. The best answers might also have explained the significance of his title 'The Seal of the Prophets'.

There were fewer good answers to this part than to part **(a)**. Candidates tended to miss the differences between the Prophet Muhammad and preceding prophets, and did not take proper care to bring out the importance of the fact that while earlier prophets' messages have been lost or distorted, his remains the guide for Muslims. Again, a pause for thought and some planning might have enabled some candidates to gain valuable extra marks.

Question 4

This was the more popular of the two optional questions, probably because it looks familiar and easy. However, as with the other questions on the paper, it presented problems to candidates who did not approach it with due care and thoughtfulness.

Part **(a)** asked for a description of a day's fasting in Ramadan. It did not ask about the whole month, but for an accurate account of what happens through the hours from waking to sleeping. Good answers would detail the meal before first light, the statement of intention to fast, the abstinence from food, drink, etc. through the day, the breaking of the fast and evening prayer observances. The best answers would give accurate details of the times when fasting begins and ends, of the ways in which many Muslims end the fast, and of the general attitude adopted during fasting.

There were some excellent answers that gave these details and more, and some candidates gained full marks in this part. The candidates who did less well were those who appeared to approach their answers without proper thought, and as a result missed basic facts.

Part **(b)** asked for those Muslims who are exempted from fasting. Most candidates were able to give at least four kinds and gained the full 2 marks available.

Part **(c)** asked for a more demanding explanation of the importance of the fast. The best answers would have mentioned the fast as one of the Pillars, and how it can bring a Muslim closer to God and also to other Muslims in the community.

There was an amount of rambling away from the topic from some candidates who did not appear to know why this key feature of Islamic life is important. Their answers suggest that in addition to teaching the content of belief in the Five Pillars, teachers might spend some time helping their students to think about the place of these in Muslim individual and communal life and why Muslims observe them.

ISLAMIYAT

Paper 2058/02

Paper 2

General comments

The general comment for Paper 1 also apply to Paper 2.

The failure to read questions properly or to answer what they were asking was particularly obvious in answers to **Question 2**, which asked about the teachings in the Hadiths concerning: 1. What Muslims believe, and 2. How they should act. A good answer would make two points about belief and action, and candidates who read the question properly would take time to think about what their chosen Hadiths taught concerning these two points. However, many candidates gave answers they had evidently learnt beforehand that did not address the two points asked for. The result in many cases was a total of less than half marks.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

This question asked candidates to identify the meaning and importance of seven underlined words or phrases from the Qur'an passages set for special study. Their meaning is determined by who or what might be referred to, or who might be speaking in the passage, and the importance is determined by the wider teaching they contain. For example, the meaning of the first phrase underlined in the paper, 'a place of assembly for men', is that this refers to the Ka'ba, and its significance is that this was made a place of meeting when Abraham was alive long before the time of historical Islam, or that it is the gathering place for the annual pilgrimage.

Candidates tend to ignore the instruction in the question, and often write long descriptive accounts of the passages rather than brief comments on the two points asked for. While there were some excellent answers from candidates who had been taught what the question asks and how to approach it, these were rather fewer than the many general answers.

Question 2

Like **Question 1**, this question on the Hadiths asks for a precise answer about the teachings of each Hadith concerning Muslim belief and action. Candidates who can identify and write about these two aspects can gain very high marks. But the majority showed few signs of having thought about the Prophet's sayings and what they mean. As has been said in the General Comments on the examination, many answers were apparently pre-learnt and bore little resemblance to what the question was asking.

Question 3

This asked in **(a)** for descriptions of three events from the time of the Prophet and Rightly-Guided Caliphs that show how they conducted relations between the Muslim community and other communities, and in **(b)** for ways in which one of these examples can provide a model for inter-state relations today.

In **(a)** candidates should have been alert to the need to describe actual events, and so accounts of qualities shown by the Prophet and Caliphs (e.g. 'The Prophet was tolerant towards his enemies...') or habitual practices (e.g. 'Abu Bakr was always alert to threats to the *umma*...') were not credited. They should also have been alert to the requirement to give examples that showed relations between the Muslim community and other communities, and so examples from the pre-Hijra period when the community had not yet emerged as a political entity, and of relations within the community, such as the pairing of Emigrants with Helpers after the Hijra, could not be credited. This question particularly required careful reading and thinking before candidates answered it.

Good answers referred to such incidents as the Treaty of Hudaibiya, the capture of Makka, the Prophet's treatment of the Jewish tribes, Abu Bakr's battles against the false prophets, and 'Umar's capture of Jerusalem. Marks were allowed in each example for the basic mention of the event (1 mark), further details (a further mark), full details including the names of leading individuals (a further mark), identifications of the political or religious principles underlying the Muslim actions.

Most candidates were able to give a few examples, and some gave very full accounts together with the principle involved. The weakest answers did not identify actual events but tended to refer to qualities shown by the Prophet. Many candidates made the mistake of thinking that the Treaty of Madina, which the Prophet made when he first arrived in the oasis, was between the Muslims and the Jewish tribes. In fact, it was intended to cover all the tribes in Madina, and it only referred to the Jewish tribes in some of its parts.

In **(b)** some candidates found a present-day instance that matched their chosen example, and developed the parallel very thoroughly. A favourite was the dispute over Kashmir, in which the Prophet's approach at Hudaibiya provided a model.

Candidates cannot really prepare for a question such as **Question 3(b)** by learning facts alone. It is intended to make them think in the examination itself about the facts they know and to use these creatively. Candidates who take a few minutes to read the question and absorb what it asks will be in a good position to give a thoughtful answer, and are likely to move into the higher mark range with the answers they give.

Question 4

This was the less popular of the two optional questions, and it was the less well answered. Its three parts asked for **(a)** a description of the work of the Scribes of the Prophet, followed by **(b)** an explanation of the significance of their work, followed by **(c)** a description of the part played by Zayd Ibn Thabit. Candidates were required to divide up their answers carefully so that they gave the appropriate information and explanation in the right part of their answer.

Good answers to part **(a)** named some of the leading Scribes (a basic point allowing any candidate to gain a mark), mentioned their work of writing down passages of revelation as the Prophet instructed them (references to memorising the revelations were irrelevant since the point of the Question is the work of the men who wrote material down), and referred to the different writing surfaces they are known to have used.

Most candidates got some of these points, though it was clear from many answers that this activity does not appear to be widely covered in teaching the syllabus.

Answers to part **(b)** – a part that required some thought in addition to factual knowledge – would have referred to the process of preserving the recited revelations between the time of the Prophet and the time it was collected together under Abu Bakr and then 'Uthman.

Fewer candidates appeared to grasp the importance of a written record of the revelations in addition to a memorised form.

Answers to part **(c)** would have given full factual accounts of the important work of Zayd, at the time both of Abu Bakr and of 'Uthman. The best answers would have explained how his work under these Caliphs differed, in that he acted alone under Abu Bakr but with a group of Muslims under 'Uthman, and would also have included something about the methods he and his colleagues employed.

While most answers included the essential facts, it appeared evident that the majority of candidates did not have a firm grasp of the traditional Muslim accounts of the collection of the Qur'an that would enable them to provide a complete narrative of what happened from the time the revelations were given to the time of the 'official' collection under 'Uthman, or to explain the parts played by key individuals.

Question 5

This was a very popular choice, and most candidates answered it well. Once again, however, it required close reading, because while part **(a)**, which asked for the names of twelve of the Prophet's wives (the names of concubines were accepted), was straightforward, part **(b)** which asked about Khadija and 'A'isha was less so: this was not about their main activities but about their importance, of Khadija during the Prophet's lifetime, and of 'A'isha after his death. The question was quite specific in what it asked, and candidates had to show care in reading it and understanding exactly what they were to do.

Most candidates were able to give all the names asked for and gained full marks for **(a)**. Some made the mistake of including the name Fatima, and a few the names of other daughters of the Prophet, and some mistook one name for another. However, generally this was a high-scoring part of the Question.

Answers to **(b)(i)** tended to give descriptive accounts of Khadija's life, some including her previous marriages. A lot of such detail was irrelevant, and it tended to divert candidates from discussing her importance, such as her moral and financial support of the Prophet, her readiness to accept Islam and her mothering the Prophet's only surviving children. The best answers concentrated on these significant points, rather than giving straightforward narratives of Khadija's life.

The treatment of 'A'isha in part **(b)(ii)** was equally patchy. The question specifically asked about her significance after the Prophet's death, but many answers began with stories of her marriage to the Prophet and her life with him. Good answers detailed her participation in community discussions during the early caliphates, her importance as a source of information and Hadiths from the Prophet, her influence in decision making, and her part in the disagreements that arose after the assassination of 'Uthman. The best answers went into these events in some detail, and provided accurate comments about her authority as a source of guidance for the community, the reasons for her opposition to 'Ali, and her part in the Battle of the Camel.