

# ISLAMIC STUDIES

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**Paper 9488/12**  
**Written Paper**

## **Key messages**

Some candidates performed well, and some found questions challenging. Overall a range of answers were seen.

There appeared to be no issue with time management and no rubric errors.

General knowledge and examples from modern times are being used wisely by candidates.

## **General comments**

Quotations from the Qur'an and Hadith, and views of scholars are still lacking in many answers. This is an area in which candidates might further develop their knowledge and skills.

Candidates need to respond to the command words in the questions. If the command words are 'discuss' or 'evaluate', for example, then candidates need to show evaluation in their answers and try to discuss the topic rather than being descriptive.

Candidates need to develop more reasoning about how to apply teachings from the Prophet's life.

## **Comments on specific questions**

### **Question 1**

**(a)** This was very well answered, and most candidates scored highly. Candidates need to focus on the words from the passage and not write in a general manner. For example, there is no need to write at length on God's numerous bounties in this question, rather focus should be on the ones mentioned in the extract. Themes such as Muslims should look around and reflect on the creation of God, or creations of God are signs for those who reflect on the existence of a higher being/Creator were identified.

**(b)** Candidates did not respond well to this question. Most candidates explained how to implement the duties mentioned in the Hadith and what the Prophet (pbuh) taught about them. While this is one way that the Prophet (pbuh) taught Muslims of their obligations towards God, more concrete examples on how the Prophet (pbuh) implemented them in his own life was what achieved higher marks. Examples showing how assiduous the Prophet (pbuh) was in his prayers, spending the night praying, or how generous he was or continuing to spread the message of Islam despite opposition were found in higher level answers,

Some candidates omitted reference to another Hadith, and so were unable to achieve the highest level of response.

**(c)** Candidates had different ways of interpreting the word 'signs'. For some it was the signs in the creation of God, such as the ones mentioned in the verse in part **(a)**. For others they were signs announcing the last day, such as the coming of the Anti-Christ. Excellent answers were able to show evaluation by explaining that not all signs can guide Muslims, some signs might not have any meaning. There were some who explained that Muslims should seek guidance from the Qur'an and not through signs, this was not what the question was asking.

## Question 2

(a) This question was well answered. Weaker responses wrote at length about the people who are eligible for almsgiving (*zakat*), such as the poor and orphans, which is one condition. Some responses included those to whom almsgiving (*zakat*) should not be paid, e.g. one's own parents, grandparents, wife, children and descendants of the Prophet (pbuh). Good responses focused on the type of person on whom almsgiving (*zakat*) is incumbent, such as sane, adult, having the required amount of savings. Answers also included the amount to be paid for each situation, such as for land and agriculture, or for each type of animal.

(b) There were some excellent answers to this question. Weaker candidates showed some evaluation and gave alternative answers, although these were not well developed. Most candidates explained the ways that one is allowed to spend money such as on themselves and on their family. A list of what Muslims should not spend money on was also given, such as prohibited (haram) things e.g. pork and alcohol and prohibited activities e.g. gambling and money laundering. Being wasteful was also mentioned by many to show the restriction in one's spending. Alternative viewpoints which were discussed in this question raised the standard of the responses. The strongest responses were clear in their summing up at the end of whether Muslims have the freedom to do what they want with their money or whether they can do it only to some extent.

## Question 3

(a) Candidates answered this question reasonably well. However, some candidates did not broach the events associated with the afterlife, such as when a person is dying, the angel of death takes the soul of the person, or punishment in the grave or the questions asked by the two angels, Munkar Nakir. Answers included the physical description of the Day of Judgement in the Qur'an such as mountains crumbling, mothers forgetting their babies and everyone, including angels, dying except God. There were lots of references to the resurrection of man and the judgement by God, as well as the placing of the books in the right hand for the pious and in the left hand for the sinners. Excellent answers also mentioned the bridge (*Sirat*) to be crossed, and the scale (*Mizan*) where deeds are weighed. Quotes from the Qur'an were found in good answers.

(b) Where candidates evaluated and had alternative views as to why Muslims do good deeds the higher levels of response were achieved. Some weak responses included a list of actions Muslims need to do to go to paradise, not discussing the topic.

Other reasons for doing good deeds that were mentioned by candidates were out of love for God/the Prophet (pbuh)/to emulate the Prophet (pbuh), to escape punishment, to be able to see God in paradise, and because angels on our shoulders are watching and recording our deeds. Some answers wrote about a moral internal compass or natural inclination to do good (*fitra*) which is found in human beings. Some answers included reference to the Hadith that says that it is not through the actions of man that they will earn paradise, but through the mercy of God. The strongest responses were clear in their summing up as to whether the statement is completely true or true to some extent.

# ISLAMIC STUDIES

Paper 9488/22

Written Paper

## Key messages

- There is clear interest from students reflected in good effort, lengthy answers and fine details.
- Most students directly answered the questions although there was a need for more precision by some students, to avoid losing focus and writing about topics in general.
- The best AO2 discussions included clear definitions, a logical argument and a clear response or conclusion.

## General comments

- For **Section A**, the most popular choice of question was **Question 1** about the places where Muslims pray and the conditions for prayer. This question was well answered.
- For **Section B**, candidates answered both **Questions 3** and **4**, with slightly more choosing **Question 3**.
- There was a wide range of answers with some strong responses to each of the questions. Good knowledge and understanding were backed by selection of relevant details to address the specific question.
- Reference to quotations and scholars might be improved and was a feature of the very strongest responses.

## Comments on specific questions

### Question 1

(a) Most candidates chose this question and answered well, achieving four or five marks. Good answers included a clean place; aligned towards the *qiblah* in Mecca; without pictures / photographs; without any statues. Avoiding certain places or conditions was also credited, such as avoiding an unclean place; avoiding a toilet; not in a graveyard or in the religious building of another religion. A few misread the question as general conditions rather than specifically about the places where Muslims may pray, underlining the importance of reading the question carefully.

(b) This was a very well answered question. Many directly addressed the focus of the importance and did not just write out conditions. The importance was linked to satisfying the commands of God; out of respect and affection for the Prophet (pbuh) and a desire to follow him; and with hope of entry into Paradise as a reward of satisfying the conditions as opposed to fear of hell fire for neglecting them. Some brought out less often mentioned points about how keeping to the conditions helped everyone to observe the rituals accurately and thereby foster unity in the community, strengthening the faith of all.

(c) This question proved more challenging to candidates. Many chose two actions but then explained them, carrying on in more detail from **part (b)**. The problem with this approach was that this satisfied AO1 knowledge and understanding but for this part marks are given for AO2, evaluation. Good answers might compare, for instance, making ablution (*wudu*) with reading extra prayers (*Sunnah* or *nafl*). It could be argued that ablution is compulsory, unless unbroken since the last prayer for Sunni Muslims, or compulsory at all prayers for Shi'a. Extra prayers might not be required but might be considered highly recommended and help gain a sense of readiness and mental preparedness for the prayer. This last point might be said to also apply to ablution, thereby drawing a comparison and finding a similarity as well as a difference.

## Question 2

(a) This was a less popular question. Most candidates achieved three points, with five proving more difficult. Less mentioned points, which might help candidates, include: to repeat the lines of the adhan; to recite the adhan from a high place; the words and action of the call (*iqamah*) before prayer; the rituals of pilgrimage (*Hajj*) such as where to put on clothing (*ihram*) and to respect the scholars who were companions of Muhammad (pbuh). The people of Medina closely followed the Sunnah of the Prophet (pbuh) so almost any authentic Sunnah was also relevant.

(b) For those who had learned this topic, this was a well answered question. However, responses need to be specific to achieve a good mark, showing evidence of detailed knowledge and understanding. The answer hinges on understanding that authentic Hadith traditions were passed down from companions in Medina, and from here the Sunnah was preserved. They remembered Muhammad (pbuh) and the Sunnah well. Their practices ('urf) became the norm for the people who could always check with them if in doubt about any matter, amongst the large numbers of scholars who lived in the city. As companions died, their followers (*tabi'un*) carrying on practicing the Sunnah. This meant the second source of Islamic law, the Hadith, could be traced to here and considered reliable, when put together by the Hadith collectors. This added authority to traditional methods of Islamic law. Candidates who brought out the points about authenticity and authority tended to gain the top levels.

(c) It could be debated how far Muslims might look to the habits of the people of Medina today as against those in Muhammad's day and the habits under the Rightly-Guided Caliphs and subsequently. Strong responses drew a distinction between different time periods. Strong answers discussed relevance and considered what Muslims need to guide them nowadays, giving examples and relating them to the habits of the people of Medina. Some argued that the time of Medina was so far in the past, in a different context, that 'habits' were far less important today and that Muslims should stick not to habits or customs but to what is required and compulsory and leave aside the finer points so that the main requirements can more flexibly be interpreted to make life easier for Muslims coping with living in modern situations.

## Question 3

(a) Good responses knew about al-Hallaj and excellent responses knew in detail and were able to quote part of his poetry. Relevant quotations included: 'There is nothing wrapped in my turban but God.' Another famous quotation was, allegedly, 'I am Truth,' with the word truth referring in the minds of many to the ultimate truth, possibly referring to a connection with God. The strongest responses delved into the complexities of this relationship and considered different meanings in their explanations, including the Sufi concept of aiming for unity with the divine and the possibility of metaphorical expression of an inner relationship with God, not meant to challenge divine authority.

(b) This question was generally well answered, and most candidates were able to think of some risks and some benefits. Weaker responses tended to only put one side of the argument, usually only risks. This may be due to the well-known history of al-Hallaj and his denunciation for being a heretic allegedly by some, for claiming status alongside the divine, a form of the sin of association (*shirk*), although some claim this was merely part of political manoeuvring at the time. For those mentioning benefits, stronger responses mentioned the poetry of others such as Rabia of Basra or Rumi, a best seller even today, inspiring people with thoughts of the divine and bringing some to have interest and respect for Islam as a result.

## Question 4

(a) Fewer candidates answered this question. The word 'distinctive' could be interpreted to mean different or simply what is identified with this movement. Basic points were made by some candidates such as rolling up trousers in prayer and various other small differences in practice. More advanced detail included the distinctive approach to Islamic Law (*shariah*) and following of scholar Ibn Taymiyyah, who said that innovations (*bid'ah*) had crept into Islam with the visiting of tombs and following of saints or holy people, who were called friends of God (*awliya*). Salafis may make individual interpretations (*ijihad*) directly from the Qur'an and Sunnah, rejecting some of the scholarly derivations made by the classical schools of thought and deriving interpretation from the practices of the companions directly. Some candidates knew a lot about this topic and were evidently interested in learning about it and furthering their own research.

(b) This question provided some interesting discussions with candidates taking different views. This did not matter; what mattered was the quality of the discussion, how well backed up by reasoning and evidence it was, and awareness of different viewpoints within that discussion which contributed to the debate. Some argued that Salafi positions should be considered a part of Sunni beliefs and an offshoot of the traditional Hanbali school of jurisprudence. Others argued that the Salafi acceptance of individual interpretation (*ijtihad*) and rejection of some of the rulings made by scholars in the traditional schools of jurisprudence (*madhabs*) put them into a different category from traditional Sunni Islam. Reference to scholars might be included here, something which only one or two candidates included.

# ISLAMIC STUDIES

**Paper 9488/32**  
**Written Paper**

## **Key messages**

- Some topics were more popular, by choice of question, than others. Candidates need to be more confident when responding to questions about, for example, the 'Abbasids and Islamic philosophy.
- Knowledge and understanding was well demonstrated but better when selected and focused on the specific part of the topic asked for in each question. Some candidates wrote about topics in general, losing focus.
- Strong responses directly addressed the question, defined any terms used and wrote in clear paragraphs to build up a discussion for AO2. There was an identifiable conclusion or personal response.

## **General comments**

- In **Section A**, the question on the Umayyads was most popular. In **Section B**, Islamic art was the choice of question for most candidates.
- Good examples of candidate responses for Islamic art were seen. This was a new topic introduced with this syllabus and centres and candidates have responded well to it.
- In referring generally to Islamic contributions to science, one candidate quoted excellent background research about Rufaida Al-Aslamia, referred to as the first nurse, having made a tremendous contribution to medicine. Centres might consider studying her and others who have relevance to both heritage of Islam (paper 3) and Muslim women (paper 4) and candidates evidently have taken to this syllabus and the opportunities for personal reading and research it gives.
- As in previous series, the strongest responses focused specifically on addressing the exact wording of the question or statement, especially in response to AO2 questions.

## **Comments on specific questions**

### **Question 1**

(a) Weaker responses wrote about leadership in general without differentiating political leadership from the whole range of leaders' roles which the Umayyad Caliphs carried out, whereas stronger responses selected the relevant political aspects. It is required to refer to the figure and this was best done when specifically pointed out. For example, this figure of the Umayyad Palace in Jerusalem projected the Umayyad political power over the city of Jerusalem, helping to establish their political leadership and authority over this new area and use it as a launch pad for further expansion of the Caliphate. The development of buildings around might be mentioned and paired with a candidates' knowledge from studying this period. For example, Umar II brought in building works to create rest houses, schools, canals and roads, to respond to the requests which people had mentioned, and thereby provided political leadership.

(b) Strong responses began by clarifying or defining different purposes of leadership: political, to run government and make laws; military, to defend and expand lands held; religious, to maintain and promote Islam; and economic, to provide for the needs of the people. This was a good way to start as it provided a framework to discuss whether the Umayyad Caliph's main purpose was political leadership. That element of comparison clearly evidenced AO2 skills. Of those who answered well, some made the point that the Caliph was known as God's representative on earth, a Khalifah, and was there to provide spiritual leadership and head the Muslim community as a religious and political leader combined.

## Question 2

(a) This question was less popular but nevertheless there were some good responses. Strong knowledge and understanding were demonstrated by reference to famous scientists from this time, such as al-Biruni, who measured the angle to the horizon to calculate the circumference of the earth; Abu Bakr al-Razi, who observed carefully the illnesses of people; and Ibn al-Haytham looked for the origin of light, tracing it back to the stars. Left there, this provided evidence of knowledge but not understanding of the methods. The best responses explained rational observation and the methodology used, as well as the constraints to keep this within the beliefs of Islam.

(b) Stronger responses made some attempt to define science in academic terms, and scientists as using experiment, observing results and repeating to derive laws of physics and medical treatments. Answers might be improved with reference to scholarship, such as Professor Jim al-Khalili, who argues that Muslim scientist Ibn al-Haytham developed scientific method. He questioned everything and did not accept it until he found proof. Alternative perspectives might claim the ancient Greeks, or another civilisation contributed more and developed the first true scientists, knowledge from whom the 'Abbasids then built upon. The more candidates discussed and considered different points of view, bringing in their knowledge in organised paragraphs to develop a logical argument, the stronger the response made.

## Question 3

(a) This was a less popular choice of question. Nevertheless, some candidates are showing interest in this topic, and it has been answered by more than previously. This question necessitated reference to Islamic views on creation, the origins of the universe, and how these might be derived from rational observation of the material world. Some even see it as a natural furthering of the Qur'an's reference to 'signs' in the natural world, and where quoted, that provided evidence of strong knowledge and understanding for AO1. Other good points made by some were specific references to Islamic philosophers and what they stated. Ibn Sina, al-Biruni, Ibn Rushd and Ibn Khaldun all had relevant deductions, one or two of which might be referred to in answers and were by the strongest candidates.

(b) Weaker answers tended to explain why Muslims should care for the environment, providing knowledge and explaining it, but this is required for AO1, and this question is assessed according to AO2, so it was necessary to move on from this to discuss the links between reasoning about creation and caring for the environment. It was perfectly possible to argue that links were not necessary because care might be regarded as a command or duty and not dependent on any reasoning, it should just be obeyed. Another view was that reasoning helps Muslims make the link between creator, created and preservation, and very strong responses were able to add justification to this with some examples, such as how some Muslims planted trees and may have held the belief of reward in heaven for doing so. The more discussion that was included, the stronger the response.

## Question 4

(a) Candidates could choose any three features, but the best answers clearly stated which three were chosen and defined them clearly in the opening to the response. Weaker answers wrote in general about Islamic art. Where more than three features were covered, only three could be credited, which is a reminder to candidates to read the question carefully and to respond selectively to the question's specific requirements. Calligraphy was one of the most popular choices. Interpretations included the necessity to represent the ninety names of God in written and not visual form, due to the prohibition of images. Unity and integration of the style through flowing words might be interpreted as a sign of unity coming from the one creator. Other features chosen included illumination of the Qur'an with repeating, decorative patterns, representing the beauty and infinity of God's knowledge contained in the book. Arabesque features; niches and mihrabs specially with pearl style; domes; geometrical patterns and textiles such as prayer mats and their decoration were other features chosen. It did not matter which three features candidates chose provided they gave detailed description of features and explanation of how they might be interpreted.

(b) Stronger answers clearly defined the different periods and what sorts of art they contained. Almost all made the point that images and idols were part of pre-Islamic art but not Islamic; the best responses clearly explained why and gave examples of both pre- and Islamic pieces to show the difference. The question required candidates to discuss the extent of differences. Some argued that the extent was considerable, and that this reflected the purpose and beliefs of the societies in God. Fewer pointed out that there were some points of adaptation and continuity, which might be found in the Roman pillars and re-use of materials in Umayyad mosques, with images removed. The focus on the extent, forming a discussion and recognising different perspectives, made for the strongest responses.

# ISLAMIC STUDIES

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**Paper 9488/42**  
**Written Paper**

## **Key messages**

A range of answers were seen, and candidates performed well on all questions.

Quotations, especially from the Qur'an and Hadith, could be included to help support answers.

Answers do not have to be very lengthy to achieve the highest levels, concise answers can also achieve them.

Good knowledge around the different figures such as contemporary women and leaders was seen in the responses.

## **General comments**

Candidates were more focussed on the words of the question, making the answers more relevant.

The various areas/aspects around the topic of leadership needed more depth, as well as reference to current leaders and their contribution to their society/country.

The standard of the responses is improving year in year on. Knowledge shown in answers is getting better, as shown by long and detailed responses.

Inclusion of quotations from the Qur'an and Hadith and to the views of scholars, gives scope for higher levels and is encouraged in answers.

## **Comments on specific questions**

### **Question 1**

This was the most popular question, and it was well answered. Candidates had plenty to write on the different roles women play inside and outside the house. Some mentioned the traditional roles, such as being a stay-at-home mother, looking after the children and doing the house chores and even looking after an extended family which seems to be the norms in a patriarchal society. Quotes showing the importance of mothers in Islam were seen in excellent answers.

However, as alternative views, responses also included the different roles outside the house that women excel in, such as imparting knowledge, or having a career that is more suited for their caring and nurturing nature, such as teacher or doctor.

References were made to figures like Khadija, Aisha, Lubna, Malala and others to show that women can excel in both spheres without jeopardising any of their roles. Good answers also mentioned the ability of women to multitask, thus making their role both inside and outside possible.

Some weak responses were about how Islam has improved the status of women, from being considered an object of pleasure and monetary gain to having a more honourable status as the counterpart of man, and discussed some of a woman's roles, however there was no discussion on which role is greater.

## Question 2

This question was the second most popular question and was well answered. There were some very good responses, citing examples from the Prophet's life on how he called the Quraysh to Islam and had to face opposition and torture.

Candidates explained the difficulties/challenges that Muslims living as a minority face which can deter them from calling others to Islam. Rise of Islamophobia/racism and laws such as banning of the hijab were cited to show that Muslims already have a hard life living in these countries, and their chances of calling others would therefore be restricted. The best answers, however, were those that showed that despite the restrictions there are other ways, for example just by being good Muslims, and projecting a good image of Islam through their demeanour and dealing with others.

Some weaker candidates wrote about calling to Islam in countries where Muslims are in majority, such as Pakistan. This was not what the question was asking.

Quotes from the Qur'an and Hadith would have helped improve answers.

## Question 3

This was not such a popular question and the range of marks varied. Some argued that from an Islamic point of view, it is not allowed for Muslim women to be political leaders based on the Hadith of the Prophet (pbuh). However, there is nothing to prevent them from being leaders in other fields, such as in education, social, or other areas as was the case with famous women of the past, such as Aisha, Khadija (a businesswoman having men working under her headship), Lubna (who was in charge of the library), Fatima Fihriyya (who was the founder of the Qarawiyyin Mosque which later became a University).

Others made the point that women are strong and can take any role and excel at it, even the role of political leaders, and went on to describe the qualities that are required to be a good leader, qualities that can be found in women.

References to women leaders of the past, such as Razia Sultana, Aisha, or more recent ones, such as Benazir Bhutto, Mariam Nawaz and Shukria Barakzai (Afghan politician) were made to show that Muslim women can be politically involved and take leadership roles. The knowledge of the candidates on the topic of leadership was extensive. More references to the Qur'an and Hadith on this topic could have been used.