

ISLAMIC STUDIES

Paper 9488/12
Written Paper

Key messages

All questions were chosen equally, with **Question 1** being compulsory.

Candidates performed equally well on all questions.

There is a marked improvement in the AO2 answers, candidates are answering these questions more fully. There is scope for more improvement in developing the structure of the essays.

There appeared to be no time management issues and no rubric errors.

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

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

General comments

Quotations from the Qur'an and Hadith, and views of scholars do not appear in many answers. If relevant, these could help improve marks.

Candidates need to engage with the question and discuss the topic for the AO2 parts. Also, for better marks different points of view should be included in answers and where possible alternative views.

Candidates should develop more reasoning about how to apply the teachings from the life of the Prophet (pbuh) in the lives of Muslims.

More in-depth knowledge of the life of the Prophet (pbuh), especially specific events in his life, will help in answering **Question 1(b)**.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

(a) Most candidates achieved 5 marks by listing teachings from the passage. The theme of purity/sincerity in one's intention, doing actions to please God, not showing off or do good deeds for material reason were identified by most candidates and well brought out. The word *riya* (doing an action to earn praise/appreciation from others rather than from God) was also explained by many. Some candidates also mentioned examples from real life of how the teaching can be put into practice, which was not necessary in this question (this question is focussed on the passage itself).

The Hadith of the Prophet about someone who does Jihad, not out of good intention but for the booty was quoted by candidates and was valid as supporting information.

Only five points are required for this question, extra points do not amount to extra marks.

(b) This question was well answered by some candidates who could explain, with examples from the Prophet's life, how arrogance could be avoided, such as his spending time with those lower in society, such as the poor or orphans and his humble attitude to others. His humility in dealing with the pagan Quraysh, such as at the conquest of Mecca, was also quoted in some better answers. Many, however, struggled to find good examples from the life of the Prophet (pbuh) and mentioned events showing his kind and forgiving nature, rather than his humility, such as after the incident in Taif, or the old lady who was throwing rubbish on him. Examples of his honesty and trustworthiness, for example, in the ways he conducted trade, were also given, but were not relevant in this instance.

There were some good commentaries on the verse itself, and most candidates recognised the verse as being the advice of Luqman to his son.

Responses needed to include reference to another Hadith or verse, which some candidates omitted. These candidates were unable to achieve the highest level of response.

(c) This question was mostly answered well. Candidates could discuss the statement and bring alternative views, such as talking about one's deeds is allowed in some circumstances, e.g. for setting good example, as was done by the Prophet (pbuh) himself. Many candidates mentioned the Hadith about the virtue of giving charity with the right hand without the left hand knowing about it to support their answer. Some candidates also mentioned how telling others of the charity one gave can be embarrassing for the person receiving it and therefore should be avoided.

Some candidates discussed the statement by writing about other ways to show sincerity, such as by praying the night prayer (Tahajjud) which is witnessed only by God.

Question 2

(a) This question was very well answered. Candidates were able to show how acts of worship such as prayer (salah), fasting (sawm) and almsgiving (zakat) increase Muslims' piety and God-consciousness. Quotes from Qur'an were also included by strong candidates. Weaker candidates wrote about beliefs that can increase God-consciousness (taqwa) rather than acts of worship, showing that more attention should be paid to the words in the question.

(b) This was answered relatively well by some candidates. Most candidates agreed with the statement without writing about alternative views and so did not reach the high levels. Responses included the recitation of the statement of faith (shahadah) when a person reverts to Islam and how it brings the person to the state of a newborn with all their past sins forgiven by God. Strong responses went on to show that the statement of faith (shahadah) also purifies Muslims by keeping them away from sins, such as associating partners with God (shirk) or disbelief (kufr) or even showing off (riya).

Alternative viewpoints which were discussed in this question raised the standard of the responses. Candidates for example, who discussed the word 'main' and explained other main purposes of the statement of faith (shahadah), such as to strengthen ones' faith or to show Muslims' loyalty to God first and then to the Prophet (pbuh) gained marks in the upper levels. The strongest responses were clear in their summing up of the different purposes of the statement of faith (shahadah) and stated which they considered as the main purpose.

Other attempts at giving alternative views included other Pillars which purify Muslims, for example almsgiving (zakat) which purifies Muslims from greed and attachment to material possessions.

Question 3

(a) Many candidates knew the major differences between daily prayer and Eid prayer, such as the occasions for the two Eid prayers, one marking the end of Ramadan and the other the end of Hajj. But the finer details, for example only 2 units with an additional six or twelve Takbirs for both Eid prayers, were missed by weaker candidates. Most candidates also wrote about the preparation/personal grooming required for Eid prayers which were valid points, but the focus of the answer should have been on the prayers themselves.

(b) This question was well answered. Candidates mostly agreed with the statement and explained the ways Eid prayer bring the whole Muslim community together, for example by having people from all levels of society standing together, with their shoulders touching, facing the same direction. Some even mentioned meeting Muslims who they were estranged with or who they have not seen for a long time, all coming together to pray the Eid prayer. There were also some attempts at alternative views, such as other opportunities on Eid day for Muslims to be together such as at family gatherings, with a meal being served to family and friends, especially for Eid-ul-Adha, where the meat of the sacrificed animal is served. However, the word 'included' was not focused on enough, for example the meat of the sacrificed animal being shared with the poor to include them in the festivities. Some candidates also mentioned other events from the life of Muslims where all Muslims are included, such as the birthday of the Prophet (pbuh), but this was not a strong argument as not all Muslims celebrate. Strong candidates were able to discuss the word 'everyone' and explained how women and children are excluded from some mosques or Eid gatherings. None of the candidates mentioned about the fact that non-Muslims are not included in the Eid prayers and this would have been a good point for alternative views.

ISLAMIC STUDIES

Paper 9488/22

Written Paper

Key messages

- The standard of candidate responses was strong this year.
- Candidates appeared interested, enthusiastic and even passionate about the subject, reflected in the effort, length and detail of their answers.
- Whilst some questions were chosen more than others, candidates chose from across the paper, showing strong knowledge and understanding of all the topics covered.
- AO2 evaluative answers are improving. There is further scope to improve structured writing, including making definitions and clear, consistent conclusions responding to the specific wording of the question.

General comments

- **Question 1**, focusing on the Qur' an, was the most popular choice for **Section A**, though those who chose **Question 2** performed equally well. Both questions were answered quite well.
- For **Section B**, **Question 4** on the Mahdi was most popular, although again there were some very strong answers for **Question 3**.
- Candidates have improved their essay structure, use of paragraphs and development of evaluation.
- Further improvements could be made by ensuring conclusions are integral to the argument made and not tagged on the end of a response without much reference to what was written earlier.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

(a) Nearly all candidates achieved 5 marks and simply listing teachings was sufficient for this part. Note that prayer (salah) was accepted as a teaching from the Qur' an, but the exact timings of the five prayers come from the Sunnah of Muhammad (pbuh) so are not given in the Qur' an. Rough details of when to pray, such as in the morning and the evening, were given so that was accepted.

(b) There were many different approaches candidates took to answer this question. Some traced the context of revelations in the life of Muhammad (pbuh) and how they progressively explained beliefs such as monotheism: first to the pagan Meccans, emphasising differences, and then to the Medinans, some of whom were monotheists, emphasising similarities. Other aspects were the practice of prayer and how that became clearer after the Night Journey, progressively revealed so as not to be too burdensome. The strongest responses mentioned how abrogation (naskh) progressively explained teachings, giving the example of how alcohol was progressively banned in different circumstances, first during prayer and then at all times.

(c) Some candidates missed the focus of this question and compared the use of the Qur' an in general to the use of the Hadith, stating that both were needed. Others saw the focus and discussed about choosing relevant verses and considering the context of the revelation of different verses and if this should be considered when looking for relevant verses to decide scholarly opinion. Practical matters of referencing were considered by some, and a few mentioned abrogation (naskh) and if this meant parts of the Qur' an were no longer to be referred to.

Question 2

(a) Candidates knew and could accurately name, using correct terminology, secondary sources. They also described that the primary sources were always used first and secondary sources could never

contradict or override primary ones. Some mentioned use of secondary sources in particular schools of thought. It was sufficient to make a short overview in 5 to 10 lines and more was not necessary; some candidates wrote too long on this part, worth 5 marks, when they have achieved the 5 marks in the first few lines and could have spent more time on other questions.

(b) Candidates knew that reasoning (aql) was a source of Islamic law (shariah), but fewer knew the approach or opinion of it taken by one school of thought. The best responses made clear how this was more commonly used in Shi'i schools of thought in which a qualified Imam is thought to possess power of interpretation so that reasoning can be concluded without error. Candidates did know and expressed well that the primary sources of Qur'an and Hadith should always be used first and secondary sources such as consensus of scholars (ijma) next, before reasoning is considered.

(c) Most candidates described analogy (qiyas) and some added examples of how it could be used within one school of thought of Islamic jurisprudence, often one Sunni school which they had studied. An essay with a long paragraph on analogy (qiyas) followed by a long paragraph on reasoning (aql) was not always the most effective way of approaching this question, since this risked drifting into description. It could work if clear evaluative comments, pointing out similarities and differences, were included and the paragraph broken up into shorter points. Another approach was to focus on similarities and differences, which helped to steer commentary towards evaluation.

Question 3

(a) Candidates understood what individual interpretation (ijtihad) is and could define it as a source of Islamic law (shariah). Candidates were generally much stronger at explaining ijihad in general as a source, than they were at giving examples of it in practice. However, a few candidates were very good at giving examples both from the early days of Islam, when people made interpretations about issues such as the call for Friday prayers and matters of practice, as well as how reasoning might be applied to modern situations of medical ethics, where clear teachings from the Qur'an and Hadith are not available.

(b) Fewer candidates were aware of the scholarly debate which has and is still occurring about matters relating to this statement, but some did refer to the scholar al-Ghazali, who mentioned that the 'gates of ijihad are closed'. Those who understood this were able to relate one view, which is that the companions (sahaba) knew the Prophet (pbuh) best and understood the context for his sunnah, so could be the only ones who could reliably apply this to new situations. The alternative view is that Muslims today should not be restricted by leaders in Islamic history and should apply reasoning where necessary to find solutions to new situations. Those responses which engaged with this debate and came to a reasoned conclusion achieved good marks.

Question 4

(a) This was a popular and very well answered question. Candidates new the background of the line of Imams and the occultation, and how the Mahdi may reappear in future. Best answers were more detailed. Some candidates had pre-learned information about the distinctive features of Shi'i Islam, such as the position of Imams and the history of the struggle of the Caliphate with 'Ali's family line. However, lengthy background was not relevant to this question. Over time, responses related to Shi'i Islam have much improved and there is now much more mature awareness of Shi'i traditions and very few candidates seem to be confused about them.

(b) This was generally well answered with candidates adding detail about Sunni traditions and writing clear paragraphs to compare the two. Many suggested the differences were insignificant and others that there were key parts of the traditions which were very different. The strongest answers made evaluative judgments about the extent of difference at the end of their essay, in a concluding paragraph, drawing the evaluation together. Some did not include a conclusion or did not make any comment about extent of difference, but those who did clearly showed confident and mature reasoning, which helped to achieve a higher level. It should be noted that to achieve level 5, candidates need to be aware and clearly show that they are aware that there are different perspectives – they can point this out in their response with clear signposting such as 'a different perspective is' and so on.

ISLAMIC STUDIES

Paper 9488/32
Written Paper

Key messages

- The standard was good, and improvements in subject knowledge and use of structured writing were seen.
- Philosophy and the natural world was well answered and more chose this topic than in previous years.
- Many candidates focused on the specific question set, more so than previously, although there is still more to do to focus responses.
- Reference to the sources for **Questions 1(a)** and **2(a)** was much better done this year with almost all candidates specifically referring and commenting on the figures in their answers.

General comments

- In **Section A**, the question on the Umayyads was most popular, but there were more responses for the 'Abbasids than last year. In **Section B**, Islamic art was the choice of question for most candidates.
- In **Section B**, Islamic architecture was the more popular choice, though again there were many answers for both questions, and the balance of candidate responses was better, showing evidence of coverage of the syllabus.
- Knowledge was strong, with candidates showing good knowledge of architecture and philosophy as well as improved knowledge of the 'Abbasids.
- There are still some candidates who appear to write essays based on pre-learned answers to different questions. This means that they struggle to achieve higher levels because knowledge selected or arguments made miss the focus of the question asked.
- Candidates were clearly attempting to make definitions and conclusions to evaluative questions and could go further by crafting their middle paragraphs more closely to ensure a consistent argument is developed.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

(a) It was notable that nearly all candidates referred to the mosque in Aleppo in Fig. 1.1 and were able to detail how the domes and columns, minaret and symmetrically patterned prayer space without any images or idols, showed how the Umayyads had invested in developing architecture. Weaker responses wrote generally about Umayyad developments from pre-learned sources, mentioning mosques but not necessarily focusing on the architectural developments.

(b) Many candidates agreed with the statement and detailed this, using examples of mosques which left impressive examples to the world. However, this position did not add alternative points of view. Weaker answers wrote about all the Umayyad policies which they had learned, mentioning religious policies but missing the required focus. Other views included that expansion to convert and include more Muslims in the Caliphate was a more important religious policy and the newly built mosques were a result of this policy, not as a policy in isolation. This was an insightful conclusion and showed confidence and maturity in the handling of evaluation.

Question 2

(a) This question was very well answered. Candidates noticed that the Sanskrit fable, illustrated from the original text in the Eastern tradition, had been copied and translated into Arabic. This shows that the Muslim translators and copyists were open to other traditions and learning from them: knowledge was being preserved, and they were taking the trouble to accurately copy it so that they could learn from it in the local Arabic language. Most candidates referred to the House of Wisdom library in Baghdad under the 'Abbasids and the culture of discussion amongst the scholars who lived under the 'Abbasid Caliphate, enabling a degree of sharing of knowledge from different traditions.

(b) This statement proved a bit more challenging for candidates to respond to. Some noted that the 'Abbasids were well known for the education and knowledge which developed under them and their investment in building up the library in Baghdad. Nevertheless, they also left mosques, but far fewer survive today than those from Umayyad times, partly due to the following history of destruction under the Mongol invasion. This complicated interpretations. A very strong argument, only noted by a few, was to challenge the question and question whether education and religious facilities could be divided at all, since under the Caliphate these matters were intertwined and most education took place in religious facilities to start with.

Question 3

(a) Strong responses mentioned scholars and explained how they interpreted signs. Some referred to reasoning (*aql*) in Islamic scholarship and how those qualified to interpret, such as Imams, might make their interpretations within the bounds of the Qur'an and Hadith, to ensure that their interpretations supported mainstream Islamic positions. Others mentioned philosophy and how philosophers such as Ibn Sina made interpretation using logic but always with the presupposition of the existence of a single, creator God behind those signs, creating unity in the universe.

(b) Some mentioned Islamic philosophy (*falsafah*) and particularly the novel Hayy ibn Zaqqāz by Ibn Tufayl, giving details of the signs observed by the boy Hayy living in isolation from humanity, and the meanings he interpreted, which aligned with mainstream Islamic beliefs. Some answers detailed methodology for interpretation and the importance of reading in too much or even idolising beauty in nature, since in Islam it is the creator alone, not the creation, considered worthy of worship. Arguments were well written and questioned how far individual Muslims could derive meaning from nature without being led astray by their own thoughts, whereas the Qur'an provided unequivocal guidance standardised and accessible across the Muslim world, complete with textual guidance. Nevertheless, some mentioned the concept of the Qur'an in nature, suggesting those same signs could be observed fully in the world. Weaker answers were short or struggled to address the extent to which teachings could be found.

Question 4

(a) This was a popular question, very well answered. Function included amplification of voice, practical matters such as providing a covered, cooled prayer space, enabling unity of believers in lines for prayer. Strong responses gave examples of mosques, such as al-Aqsa and Ottoman mosques in Istanbul. Meanings associated with the unity of the transcendent, God, symbolised in the dome which may also represent the world, were very well explained by many candidates, showing attention to detail and strong understanding of this topic.

(b) Candidates should be aware that when asked to respond to statements, every word in that statement is there for a reason. Here the word 'completely' suggests everything changed. Astute candidates noticed the word and said that in some ways beliefs changed completely with the eradication of all visual representations of the divine, so architecture changed to reflect this. Others noted column decoration, arches and intricate patterns of Roman buildings were retained, provided they did not breach the prohibition of idols, and this can be seen in examples of mosques in Syria, for example. Other arguments expressed noted that the expansion of Islam across a much greater geographical area meant that new styles of architecture inevitably changed completely from that of the Bedouin to the Persian to the North African, as cultural expression intertwined with religion. These made for excellent arguments. Weaker responses tended to describe architecture, especially of the Umayyads, without pointing out the actual changes and adding comment on them.

ISLAMIC STUDIES

Paper 9488/42
Written Paper

Key messages

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

Quotations, especially from the Qur'an and Hadith, on the specific areas could be used to improve answers.

Candidates need to produce answers with concise and relevant information rather than lengthy answers with irrelevant information.

There were no rubric errors and candidates appeared to manage the time allotted well.

General comments

Candidates are more focused on the words of the question, making the answers more relevant.

The topic of leadership still needs improvement, with special reference to current leaders and their contribution to their society/country.

Contribution or achievements of contemporary Muslim women should be covered with the same depth as women of the past.

The standard of responses and the knowledge of candidates is improving.

For higher marks candidates should link their answer to the stimulus in the question, and focus on key terms rather than writing in a general manner.

Inclusion of quotations from the Qur'an and Hadith and to the views of scholars, gives scope for more marks and should be encouraged in answers.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

Most of the candidates agreed with the statement and explained reasons why Muslims should fulfil their responsibilities to their leaders, such as it is a requirement of their duties towards God. Others explained the ways Muslims can fulfil their responsibilities towards their leaders, such as by obeying them, being loyal to them, paying the taxes imposed on them, and generally acting as good citizens in the country they live in. Many quoted Qur'an 4.59 ('O you who have believed, obey Allah and obey the Messenger and those in authority among you.') which was relevant as evidence for their arguments.

Strong responses were able to discuss the word 'all' and show that although obedience is due to just leaders, the same could not be expected if the leaders are corrupt or imposing laws that go against Islamic principles, such as fighting other Muslim states without reason.

Reference to leaders of the past, such as the Prophet (pbuh), the four Rightly Guided Caliphs and some of the Umayyad Caliphs were made and were creditable as the question did not specify any timeframe. Candidates could have mentioned modern leaders and their contribution to the society they governed to show why they deserve or do not deserve the obedience/loyalty/respect of their subjects.

Question 2

This was a very popular question and the fact that it covers both areas of women and leadership made it challenging for some. Although the question was not on women of the past lots of discussion was made on famous women leaders, such as Razia Sultana, Queen Arwa, Noorjahan, Khadija and Aisha. Most of the responses attempted to show that these women could easily hold important roles in the society they lived in and still adhere to their Islamic values. Khadija's role as a successful businesswoman along with being the wife and moral support of the Prophet (pbuh) who was himself a leader was well brought out. The same for Aisha, who not only was a teacher and jurist but also the commander of an army in the Battle of Camel, while still maintaining Islamic hijab and avoiding free mixing with the men by teaching the Companions behind a veil. For Razia Sultana, most candidates were of the view that she did not compromise religious values contradicting statements where they mentioned that she dressed like a man without any head covering (hijab), which was also unusual for the standard of that time.

However, the question specifically asked about contemporary Muslim women, and this knowledge was found lacking in many responses. At most answers were about strong women figures like Malala, but only strong candidates could link her to the question through her political stance, such as fighting for women's right to education. Responses which mentioned modern leaders, such as Benazir Bhutto, most of the time proposed the view that these women were able to hold a political office without forgoing their religious values and no alternative view was offered. There were however a few answers where challenges faced by these women were explained, for example in taking care of the family, or in maintaining modesty, such as not shaking hands with non-Mahram males or wearing the Islamic hijab, etc.

Some very good responses referred to modern women leaders such as Halimah Yacob, the Singapore President, and Shaikh Hasina, Prime Minister of Bangladesh, showing an awareness of the world they live in and current political affairs.

Question 3

This was a popular question but was not well answered. Most argued that Muslims should work together with people of other faiths to solve problems of modern society, such as protection of the environment, poverty, rise of radicalism and so on, but depth on how to do that was lacking. Many responses mentioned examples from the life of the Prophet (pbuh) where he interacted with non-Muslims to address issues in the society of the time, such as his participation in the treaty to fight for the justice of the weak (Hilful Fudul). Others explained why it is not prohibited in Islam to interact with people of other faiths with good examples, for example famous people like Caliph Umar did it.

There were, however, very few alternative views given for this question. The strongest answers made evaluative judgments about the extent that Muslims can work together with non-Muslims, for example to address issues such as the rise of Islamophobia, which does not directly affect people of other faiths and therefore might not interest them.

Weaker responses included material about the challenges Muslims (whether men or women) face when living in Muslim minority countries, such as not being allowed to pray/give the call to prayer (*adhan*), not being able to slaughter an animal for Eid-ul Adha, or the challenge of Muslim women who wear modest Islamic clothing in getting their chosen jobs. This was not what the question was asking for and candidates should engage more with the question rather than using material whether it is relevant to the question or not.

A good response to this question could have referred to examples from various countries, and the specific challenges that are posed there, for example the rise of secularism which can be restrictive to all religious groups, not just Muslims.