

ISLAMIC STUDIES

<p>Paper 9488/12 Paper 1</p>
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Key messages

Most candidates performed well as they were familiar with many of the topics in this syllabus. Overall, a range of responses was seen.

Candidates could improve their performance in this paper by being more evaluative in their answers and considering not only different views but also alternative views for the AO2 questions.

Candidates performed equally well on all questions.

General comments

The standard of performance was better than in previous years.

The evaluative part of the questions was answered well, and much knowledge was displayed on the topics.

There was an improvement in the way candidates addressed the specific demands of each question. Many candidates did not just write about what they knew but linked each paragraph they wrote to the terms of the question. Answers can be improved by developing each point made in different paragraphs, supported by examples.

Some candidates referred to quotations from the Qur'an and Hadith, and a few to the views of scholars. This is an area in which candidates might further develop their knowledge and skills. If they are able to learn a few relevant quotations and deploy them in their essays then it will help provide further evidence of their knowledge and understanding. Evidence that they have read the opinions of scholars might also help in some answers. Candidates should develop more the skill of how to apply the teachings from the life of the Prophet (pbuh) to the lives of Muslims now.

Another feature of the best answers was that they were clear on what the terms in the question meant, and often defined them at the outset of their answer. Able candidates might further improve their answers by noticing finer points, exceptions to general points, and pointing out complexity and diversity where it is found.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

This is a compulsory question, and most candidates did well. It is comprised of **part (a)**, which is to describe the teachings from an extract from the Qur'an or Hadith, **part (b)**, which is a broader question based on one of the extracts from **part (a)** and **part (c)** which is about the implementation of the teachings of the Qur'an and Hadith.

(a) Describe the main teachings from Qur'an 31.17.

Most candidates were able to achieve full marks for this question. Candidates were asked to give the main teachings from the verse which deals with the advice that Luqman gave to his son. Candidates were able to pick out the main teachings, such as establishing daily prayers, enjoining good and forbidding evil, being patient in the face of calamity and staying steadfast. There is no need to write lengthy answers for this question, it is better to spend more time on the questions which are worth 10 or 15 marks.

- (b) **Explain Muhammad’s attitude to the persecutions by the Quraish in Mecca. You must refer to Hadith 27 and any other hadith or verse from the Qur’an that you have studied.**

There was a mixed response to this question. Candidates were asked to explain the Prophet’s attitude to the persecutions by the Quraish in Mecca. Some responses focused on the persecutions endured by the Prophet (pbuh) but did not elaborate on how he reacted to those persecutions. Most candidates elaborated on both persecutions (e.g. physical or emotional) and the reaction of the Prophet (pbuh) to these.

Some candidates referred to the attitude of the Prophet (pbuh) towards the Quraish in Medina even though the question specified Mecca. Other responses mentioned the persecutions to the companions of the Prophet (pbuh), and their reactions which was irrelevant.

The best responses described the character of the Prophet (pbuh) as forbearing and patient, never retaliating and persevering in his mission to spread Islam despite the fact the odds were against him.

- (c) **‘Muslims should show patience in all circumstances in their lives.’ Discuss this statement with reference to different points of view.**

Most candidates were able to give examples of situations in real life where Muslims should show patience. Candidates wrote answers which displayed different points of view and were supported by quotes from the Qur’an and Hadith. Excellent candidates also referred to alternative views, mentioning situations, such as when Muslims are deprived of their rights, and claiming that in these cases showing patience was not enough. Responses also mentioned issues such as domestic violence which cannot be met with patience. Candidates who were able to give alternative viewpoints, with well-structured discussions and evidence to support their argument, achieved the higher levels.

Question 2

- (a) **Explain how Muslims show their devotion to God through Eid ul-Fitr and Eid ul-Adha.**

This is one of the optional questions and it was popular among candidates, who answered it well. Responses included prayers on the night before Eid, the preparation for the day (bath, wearing of scents and new clothes), Eid prayer, which shows brotherhood and unity of the Islamic community (*ummah*), the payment of the obligatory charity on the day of Eid (*zakat ul-Fitr*), visiting family to strengthen family ties, sacrifice of an animal for Eid ul-Adha, and the completion of pilgrimage (*Hajj*) as acts of devotion. The more candidates showed a connection between performing these deeds and devotion to God, the better the answer. Weak responses were too descriptive and did not make the link between the rituals and showing devotion to God.

- (b) **‘The occasions of Eid are the only days on which Muslims should celebrate.’ Evaluate this statement.**

Candidates answered this question well, showing good evaluation. Some candidates presented different points of view on why Muslims should celebrate the two Eids. Better candidates mentioned alternative occasions to celebrate, such as the birth of the Prophet (pbuh) (Milad un-Nabi), the ascension of the Prophet (pbuh) into heaven (Miraj), and the Night of Power (Laylat-al-Qadr). Some candidates suggested that the wedding ceremony (*nikah*), the wedding banquet (*walima*) and the birth of a child can also be celebrated.

Question 3

- (a) **Explain how belief in angels can help Muslims in their lives.**

This was a slightly less popular question than **Question 2**. Responses gave a description of the tasks given by God to some of the main angels, such as Jibreel (responsible for messages), Mika’il (responsible for rain and sustenance) and kiraman katibeen (who record the deeds of a person). Protection from angels, visiting the sick and praying for others were mentioned as how angels helped Muslims in their lives.

The best responses showed how belief in angels helps Muslims in their lives, as the question asks. Examples, such as increasing faith in God and seeking forgiveness for sins, were used to support answers. This question was testing both knowledge and understanding. Candidates need to read the question well and make sure they understand what is being asked before attempting it.

(b) 'For Muslims, belief in the revealed books is dependent on belief in prophets.' Evaluate this statement.

There was a mixed response to this question, some agreed with the statement, others suggested that belief in prophets is dependent on belief in revealed books and others argued that both beliefs are dependent on each other. References to divine books and the messengers to whom they were revealed were made.

Some candidates argued that belief in books depends on belief in prophets as the books would not have been sent had it not been for the messengers. Others argued that it is the prophets who depend on books to pass on the message of God to mankind and not the other way. The best answers discussed both beliefs as separate articles of faith and therefore not necessarily interconnected. Well-structured responses that analysed the strength of different point of views achieved the higher levels.

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Paper 9488/22
Paper 2

Key messages

- Candidates performed very well in this examination, and showed strong knowledge of the topics concerned.
- Standards of discussion and evaluation had developed considerably. Many candidates engaged with the questions, making reasoned arguments and coming to a personal conclusion.
- Knowledge appeared equally strong across all areas of the syllabus examined in Paper 2, and candidates chose all of the questions, showing a good balance across the different sections.
- The short 5-mark questions were very well answered, with many candidates achieving 5/5. The longer 15-mark AO2 questions were also well answered, with candidates demonstrating analysis and evaluation and many achieving Level 4.
- Candidates could continue to develop their evaluative comments further so that more achieve Level 5, especially by addressing the exact wording of the question or statement and selecting relevant information in response to this rather than the topic in general.

General comments

- Candidates should ensure they read the question carefully and select the information they use to tailor their answers, rather than write about the topic in general.
- In **Section B**, there are more marks available for **Questions 3(b) and 4(b)** (15 marks) than in **Section A** for **Questions 1(c) and 2(c)** (10 marks), so candidates should extend their answers accordingly and not just write the same length.
- Centres might consider making tables of comparisons on various topics as a teaching strategy, which could help candidates approach such questions more analytically.
- Every word in each question is there for a reason and helps candidates to expand their discussions. Those who write generally about the topic or follow a pre-learned discussion, such as from a practice paper, were easily noticeable and did not address the question with the right focus.
- When answering from one perspective or school of thought of the candidate's choice, it is helpful if the candidate clearly states this, for example, conditions of Friday prayers (*Jumu'ah*) from a Hanafi perspective.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

(a) Give five features of Friday prayers (*Jumu'ah*).

Candidates answered this question very well with many achieving five marks. The question was open, asking for five 'features', and Examiners credited features from any tradition because the syllabus gives candidates the freedom to choose to study two different traditions. Candidates mentioned giving the sermon (*khutbah*); the Imam briefly sitting between two sermons (*khutbahs*); two calls to prayer (*adhans*) beforehand; collection for the upkeep of the mosque; announcements; personal prayers (*du'a*) for people in need and two *rakahs* (movements and supplications) of Friday prayers (*Jumu'ah*). Different interpretations for the number required to come together for a congregation were credited, the main point being that Friday prayers (*Jumu'ah*) are prayed in a group congregation and not individually. There was no need to elaborate on these points: one point per line, making five lines, easily achieved the full five marks and ensured maximum time was available for the candidate to use to answer the other questions.

(b) Explain the conditions needed for Friday prayers (*Jumu'ah*).

Candidates generally did well on this question and could describe the conditions needed. Some focused their answers more on 'conditions', which refers to Islamic law (*shariah*) and can be explained in terms of the sources of Islamic law (*shariah*). Weaker candidates continued their descriptions of the features of Friday prayers (*Jumu'ah*), outlined in **part (a)**. Stronger answers not only described conditions but explained why they were conditions and what level of legality applied to them, according to Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*). For example, the requirement to leave work and pray is based on the command of God in the Qur'an, and is used first as a source of authority as the revealed word of God. This could be differentiated from traditions such as attending a larger congregation (*jamaat*) to gain additional reward, this being a Sunnah tradition but having no legal requirement attached to it.

A number of people should be sufficient to form a congregation (*jamaat*). There are different opinions about how many people – these range from around 40 to as few as 2. If there are insufficient numbers, the daily midday prayer (*zuhur*) is read instead. Candidates have the freedom with this syllabus to study one tradition or school of thought in detail and were credited for that, although it would help candidates to state clearly which perspective they are taking when doing so. Simply beginning the answer by stating, for example, that the candidate has studied the Hanafi school of thought and will be using that information here, is very helpful for the Examiner.

(c) 'Muslims can find all the information they need for Friday prayers (*Jumu'ah*) in the Sunnah.' Do you agree? Discuss this statement with reference to different points of view.

The strongest responses began by outlining information a Muslim might use: the Qur'an, the Sunnah, the consensus of scholars (*ijma*) and analogy (*qiyas*). Furthermore, in the practical preparation for Friday prayers (*Jumu'ah*), an Imam might consider the needs of the people for religious teaching and do some research relevant for them in the present day. Muslims might prepare information about those in need to make a charitable collection on the occasion of Friday prayers (*Jumu'ah*), although that might technically be regarded as separate from the act of worship, but part of the overall occasion.

Candidates taking an analytical approach noticed the word 'all' in the statement and responded to it. They discussed the use of the Qur'an setting the importance of *Jumu'ah* and provided the text for prayers: the importance of the law schools for defining some of the more minor details, as well as the vast amount of detail given in the Sunnah about how to perform the prayer. Candidates generally concluded that most, but not quite all, the information needed was to be found in the Sunnah.

Question 2

(a) Give five people whom a Muslim man should not marry, according to the Qur'an.

This was a very well answered question with most candidates achieving the full five marks for listing five different people whom a Muslim man should not marry. Note that the question was defined according to the Qur'an and not Muslim tradition in any one part of the world: a few candidates mentioned various traditions instead. Centres might use the reference of the Qur'an 4.23 as a source to help study the conditions. Notable answers included the prohibition to marry father's wives or step mothers; mothers; sisters; father's sisters/aunties; mother's sisters/aunties; foster mothers/wet nurses who breastfeed; foster sisters; mothers-in-law; step daughters and daughters-in-law. Listing five was all that was required; it was not necessary to add description or give more than five here.

(b) Describe the freedom Muslims have to choose marital partners, according to Islamic law (*shariah*).

Candidates gave reference to the verses of Chapter 4 of the Qur'an, in which Muslims are forbidden to marry certain relations in their life. Many candidates mentioned that homosexual marriages are not generally accepted in Muslim communities. All candidates agreed that a Muslim boy or girl should not be forced into marriage. Getting married should be by their own free will. Some referenced an incident in which the Prophet (pbuh) nullified a marriage where a girl came and told him that she was forced by her father into marriage.

Some candidates mentioned various considerations including polygamy, and suggested the man should not have the freedom to take a second wife unless given permission by his first wife, or others that polygamy is no longer valid at all in some Muslim countries. Information about the religious faith of different partners was also a limiting factor mentioned by many. Wealth and status were also mentioned and challenged: candidates felt that Muslims should be free to marry, despite traditions of family honour based on wealth. Overall, a wide variety of answers was seen and candidates answered this question well.

- (c) **'Piety is the only consideration which matters when Muslims choose a marital partner.' Do you agree? Discuss this statement with reference to different points of view.**

Strong responses began by defining piety as something religious; praying often and on time, five times a day; behaving according to the Sunnah of Muhammad (pbuh); performing pilgrimage (*Hajj*) and frequently attending services in the mosque. Weaker responses did not define piety and seemed unsure of what the word meant. The statement contained the word 'only'; this was significant because it enabled the strongest candidates to make it a focus for their discussion. Candidates are reminded that every word in the question is there for a reason and helps them to expand their discussions. Those who wrote generally about the topic or followed a pre-learned discussion, such as from a practice paper, were easily noticeable and did not address the question with the right focus.

Many candidates referred to the Hadith where the Prophet (pbuh) encouraged his companions to consider piety over wealth, beauty and lineage while choosing a marital partner. Candidates also argued that compatibility is very important when choosing the marital partner. Some said educational background and wealth are important. For some, beauty is important so that a person can stay in a happy marital life and avoid divorce during the later years of marriage.

Question 3

- (a) **Explain the position of Caliph.**

This question was open so that candidates could discuss the position of the Caliph at any period of time or give a broad overview in history. Most focused on the four rightly-guided Caliphs and the Umayyad and 'Abbasid Caliphs, but a few mentioned later Ottoman and Fatimid Caliphs. Some candidates made appropriate references to the speech of Abu Bakr in which he told the people to follow him as long as he was on the right path. This was a good starter to explain the role of the Caliph as an ordinary man, who was not perfect, and whose authority was partly dependent on just treatment of people who some Caliphs consulted through councils called *shura*.

The breadth of roles undertaken by a Caliph was explained by some: Caliph as leader, Imam, fighter and protector of the Islamic community (*ummah*). Some mentioned Umar I and Umar II and their position as morally upright, religious Caliphs who could lead with moral authority and encouraged people to follow Islam. Candidates seldom mentioned Muhammad's model in Medina or his Hadith which might help candidates understand this topic. In a Hadith, Muhammad (pbuh) said: 'Leaders will take charge of you after me, where the pious (one) will lead you with his piety and the impious (one) with his impiety, so only listen to them and obey them in everything which conforms with the truth (Islam).' The Qur'an refers to creating a vicegerent on earth. These could be said to explain the position of Caliph.

- (b) **Evaluate the ways in which the role of the Imam is different from that of the Caliph.**

Candidates understood the role of the Imam in different ways. Some thought it meant the local religious leader and contrasted their role with that of the state political leader, the Caliph. Most interpreted the Imam as the Shi'i religious leader and discussed the authority given to them in Shi'i belief. A few interpreted Imam to mean Islamic scholar and referred to the four founders of the Sunni schools of jurisprudence: Imam Abu Hanifa, Imam Malik, Imam As-Shafi'i and Imam Ahmed ibn Hanbal. Any of these ways was valid. The best responses clearly defined how they were going to respond to this question in an introductory paragraph defining Imam and Caliph.

Shi'i Muslims recognise a line of twelve Imams who led the community, with the twelfth entering occultation and expected to return towards the onset of the end of time. Meanwhile, Shi'i Imams on earth deputise for these Imams, providing guidance for their communities. Due to their authority passed down through 'Ali and the family line of Muhammad (pbuh), Shi'i Muslims believe the

Imams do not err in giving guidance and are able to use reasoning (*'aql*) and interpret teachings (*ijtihad*) to a greater extent than Sunni Muslims generally do. However, Shi'i do not claim divine status of their Imams. Understanding of this enabled candidates to gain higher levels of response.

Question 4

(a) Explain how a Sufi might rise through the spiritual stations towards union with God.

Sufi practices were well known by most candidates who chose this question, although fewer chose it than **Question 3**. Correct terminology was used for practices such as using beads (*tasbeih*); reciting Sufi prayers (*wird*); performing acts of remembrance of God (*dhikr*) and particularly meditating upon the ninety-nine names. Some of the best responses gave examples of how famous Sufis achieved higher spiritual states of awareness, particularly Rabia.

Weaker candidates wrote about the structure of Sufi orders with a follower (*mureed*) and a guider (*murshid*). This was partly relevant but needed to be explained in terms of how it related to the stations. Stronger answers defined the stations (*maqam*) as states of awareness of God and mentioned traditions from Rabia or Rumi. Some mentioned the criticisms made of Sufism and particularly those who claimed unity with God, such as al-Hallaj, writing that this was an act of association of another besides God (*shirk*). Again, this was partly relevant but not clearly focused on the main point. Candidates should ensure they read the question carefully and select the information they use to tailor their answers, rather than write about the topic in general.

(b) Compare the mystical approach of Sufism to other ways in which Muslims develop awareness of God (*taqwa*).

The best responses defined different ways in which a Muslim might develop awareness of God (*taqwa*) in their everyday lives, and this helped to set out how they were going to develop their answer from an initial introductory paragraph. Ways which candidates identified included daily prayer (*salah*); saying words to thank God or ask for God's will (*alhamdulillah* and *inshallah*); behaving according to the conduct of Muhammad (pbuh) as defined in Islamic law (*shariah*) and other generally practical ways as compared to the spiritual practices of Sufism.

Many candidates focused on differences, some criticising Sufism and others noting that a plurality of ways could lead to the same awareness. Some explained that different ways might lead to different styles of worship suitable for those in particular traditions. Judgements at the end did not need to say one way or another was right or wrong, but draw together a conclusion as to how far the ways defined were similar or different. Fewer candidates managed to do this, with most giving a brief paragraph of direct comparison and only a few giving lengthier consideration, but those who approached this question from an analytical perspective tended to achieve more highly. Centres might consider making tables of comparisons on various topics as a teaching strategy, which could help candidates approach such questions more analytically.

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Paper 9488/32
Paper 3

Key messages

- Most candidates performed well and had good subject knowledge, covering different parts of the syllabus and giving detailed information where required.
- In **Section A, Question 1** about the Umayyads was the most popular choice and in **Section B, Question 4** about Islamic Art was the most popular.
- Candidates responded well to AO2 stimuli given and generally saw the significance of the questions raised.
- Candidates had approached topics from different perspectives and were able to study different works or perspectives, a feature of this syllabus which has been positively engaged with in the evidence seen in the answers in this session.
- Further improvements could be made such as by learning some quotations, academic perspectives and further sharpening the focus of AO2 discussion answers.

General comments

- Candidates should ensure that they refer to the source used in the first question they answer. It is not necessary to write a lot about the source but it is essential to refer to it, as this is specifically mentioned in the question.
- It is a requirement of the syllabus to study a work of the candidates' choice, with examples suggested. Some had done so, but some gave only sketchy answers. The best responses gave details and occasional quotations.
- A small number of answers mentioned academic perspectives and the names of academics and their interpretations, such as opinions about interfaith relations under the Umayyads, which some academics interpreted as harmonious and others not. It would help candidates to read widely and be aware of different perspectives on the main topics.
- While candidates generally did debate issues and produce analysis for AO2, which showed improvement, further sharpening and focusing of discussion would help. Conclusions could be more focused by referring back to the specific words of the statement or question. This would help candidates convert strong Level 4 answers to excellent Level 5 ones.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

- (a) Study Fig. 1.1 which shows columns from the Great Mosque of Damascus.

Describe the religious policies of the Umayyads. You should refer to Fig. 1.1 and your own knowledge in your answer.

More candidates chose **Question 1** than **Question 2**. There are many different aspects to Umayyad policies and these were perused by different Caliphs. Some candidates gave a general overview; others focused on two or three points to develop in detail in their responses. It was necessary to refer to the figure, so a mention of Umayyad buildings such as this one, in Damascus, was necessary to achieve a good level of response.

The source shows a re-used Roman pillar with geometrical mosaics and leaf patterns, but no idols or images, so the conclusion can be reached that the Umayyads kept the best of pre-Islamic art but clearly rejected animate objects and idols and removed them from religious buildings. Other

examples of religious buildings, calligraphy and geometrical patterns, such as from Masjid al-Aqsa (Dome of the Rock) helped to make for a more detailed answer about Umayyad religious policy. These buildings helped to show the beauty of Islam and encouraged people to become observant in their prayers.

Aside from the source, candidates mentioned how Umar II expanded mosques, banned drinking and bath houses, and lived a pious life in accordance with the Qur'an and Sunnah. Others noted that some Caliphs did not pursue religious policies as much as social extravagance.

- (b) 'The Umayyads left a legacy of good interfaith relations.' Do you agree? You should refer to different points of view.**

Interfaith relations means relations between members of different religious communities, especially Muslims, Christians and Jews within the Umayyad Caliphate. Some candidates misunderstood this and thought it meant relations between different groups of Muslims, such as Sunni and Shi'i. Many candidates gave general answers and referred to the Qur'an and the advice of Abu Bakr, but these came before the Umayyad period so were relevant only in so much as some Caliphs follow them.

The best answers added some detail, as detailed examples were not always used. Centres might note that under Caliph Mu'awiyah, a church in Edessa was refurbished after an earthquake, showing that Christians were treated well. The Christian Sarjun ibn Mansur of Damascus was made a high-status official. There were some Jewish and Christian chief ministers in Cordoba, capital of Umayyad Spain. This was considered a model of good interfaith relations at a time when they were generally not so harmonious in medieval Europe. However, some ministers were treated very differently by different Caliphs and even persecuted for their Jewish or Christian faith. Candidates might look into topics such as this, where different academics have different opinions and be aware of them, so that they can make more detailed discussions considering different points of view.

Question 2

- (a) Study Fig. 2.1 which shows a page from the writings of a philosopher under 'Abbasid rule.**

Describe the contribution made by one famous scientist under the 'Abbasid Caliphate. You should refer to Fig. 2.1 and your own knowledge in your answer.

Few candidates chose **Question 2**. For references to the source, candidates noted first that some writing in Arabic is shown, which points to the fact that scholarship was now centred on Arabic or translated into Arabic, not Latin or Greek. This is a pointer to the importance the 'Abbasids placed on the translation movement and learning in general. Furthermore, the diagrams in the source show mathematical or scientific understanding, with clear and exact figures helping to explain science. This is characteristic of rational enquiry, like modern science.

Candidates could choose any scientist from the 'Abbasid period and bring out the rational work they contributed, translating or furthering classical knowledge and using reasoning to make scientific conclusions within the limitations of the period. Most chose Ibn Sina or Ibn al-Haytham. Ibn Sina wrote many works including the Canon of Medicine, building on the classical scholar Galen and his work, with added knowledge from India and China. This influenced European doctors for centuries with guidance on how to test new drugs methodically, observing their results step by step. Ibn al-Haytham followed Ptolemy and Aristotle in developing understanding of the human eye. This led to advances in medical treatment, understanding of rays of light and even pinhole cameras. The best responses made clear points such as these to describe the contribution made.

- (b) 'Abbasid scientists laid the foundation of modern science.' Do you agree? You should refer to different points of view.**

The best responses began by defining modern science as being objective, evidence based rational enquiry. An effective way of responding was to compare the contribution of 'Abbasid as opposed to ancient Greek and Roman contributions to science, and modern contributions following the western enlightenment. Some also mentioned the Umayyads who could be said to begin the Islamic interest in scholarship and continue it in Cordoba in Spain, a centre of Islamic learning for several hundred years concurrent with 'Abbasid Baghdad.

It could be argued that rational enquiry was much developed by 'Abbasid scientists. One good response mentioned the views of historians such as Matthias Schramm, who called Ibn al-Haytham the 'father of modern science' because of his method of observation which laid the basis for modern scientific enquiry. Another mention was of scientist Jim Khalili who accredited 'Abbasid Baghdad as being the cradle of modern science. Opposed to this, the scholar G J Toomer argues that we should not read into the past modern scientific medicine since the time of the 'Abbasids rule was so different from today. The occasional reference to scholarly opinion can help to make a strong answer at Level 4 and show evidence of expertise at reasoned argument when used well.

Question 3

(a) Describe how Islamic beliefs and values are expressed in one significant writing.

Many candidates chose this question, but responses varied considerably. Some chose to describe Islamic beliefs themselves – these were not what the question was asking. The focus should have been on the way in which they were expressed. To respond to this, style, the use of expression, use of rationalism, use of poetry and so on are all relevant considerations.

Some chose Ibn Tufayl's *Hayy ibn Yaqzan*. These answers were generally good and showed evidence of detailed consideration of the way Hayy worked out beliefs independently himself, by observing the world around him as he grew up with a Gazelle marooned on a desert island. He derived beliefs through rationalism, and the work contrasted this favourably with those back in the town who blindly followed established religion but had become corrupted. A few chose Al-Ghazali's work and explained his view that rationalism has flaws and incoherences and to him, acceptance of revealed belief and mystical inner experience from Sufi practices are the best way to find Islamic beliefs and values.

Candidates should consider learning a few brief quotations from their chosen work, no more than a line each, but relevant to be used as evidence to answer a question such as this. Quotations were rarely used in answers but the occasional one would help to provide evidence of detailed knowledge, a feature of a Level 4 response.

(b) Evaluate how one significant work written by a Muslim might help others to understand more about Islamic beliefs.

Weaker candidates repeated much of their answer to **part (a)** and described further beliefs as stated in their chosen work. Stronger candidates recognised that this part was about helping to develop Muslim understanding, so comments needed to be made about the effect of the writing upon Muslims. Relevant comments included how Hayy ibn Yaqzan encouraged the rationally minded to work out how Islamic beliefs could make rational sense. Rabia's poetry could help those who prefer poetic and spiritual approaches to gain a better sense of Islamic beliefs by reading her poems.

Evaluation here did not necessarily mean criticism, although for some it could be. Some candidates, for example, noted that the Qur'an and Hadith should be used as the best communicators of beliefs as the primary sources of Islamic law (*shariah*). Others wrote that beliefs were elaborated upon by their chosen work in harmony with the Qur'an and Sunnah, and in a way that helped Muslims to understand the beliefs which are sometimes allegorical in the Quranic text and sometimes difficult to understand in seventh-century Arabic for those living in another time period or cultural context. Therefore, the chosen work might help keep Muslim beliefs alive and refresh interest in them for Muslims in another generation.

Question 4

(a) Explain how Islamic art differs from that of pre-Islamic Arabia.

This was a popular question which was well answered. The most obvious point, the removal of idols, images and statues of God, was recognised by all candidates, but not all expanded on this in detail. The strongest answers included examples of how this changed, for example in the Ka'ba and in the reuse of building materials in the Great Mosque of Damascus where all Christian and Roman images were removed. Further examples from Masjid al-Aqsa (Dome of the Rock) show how calligraphy and geometrical patterns took the place of idols and images, reflecting the Islamic

belief in one unseen God. The best answers provided a range of examples to illustrate their accounts with some detail.

A few candidates pointed out that not everything changed and some aspects of pre-Islamic art were re-used, such as the leaf patterns on Roman columns and any inanimate object, such as plants, as long as images of living beings were not involved. Some candidates took a broad overview and considered Islamic art through the ages, including more modern Islamic art, contrasting this with Greek and Roman art from ancient times. This broad-brush approach was a perfectly acceptable way of answering the question, and candidates who took this approach tended to perform equally well as those who focused on the seventh century/first century after the Hijrah.

(b) ‘Muslims should embrace different cultural expressions of Islam through art.’ Do you agree? You should refer to different points of view.

Most candidates understood the main focus of this question, and referred to examples of different cultural expressions ranging from China to Turkey, South Asia to Africa. This was pleasing to see as it shows that centres had embraced the freedom to explore the diversity and richness of Islamic history and architecture through art across the world, one of the features of the new syllabus.

Various arguments were made, some raising the concern that culture might detract from focus on monotheism if beautiful expressions were made which took minds away from God. Others argued that culture might present Islam favourably to local populations and recognise faith through a way that was important in different languages and styles. While many candidates wrote clear arguments and reached Level 4, fewer reached Level 5 because they did not necessarily understand or articulate a response to the word ‘embrace’. This means that Muslims should not only accept, but value and engage with, and positively contribute to and use. Those candidates who did offer a definition of ‘embrace’ and discussed whether Muslims should accept or embrace, and came to a reasoned conclusion, made the best responses.

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Paper 9488/42
Paper 4

Key messages

- The standard of answers has improved from previous years.
- Knowledge concerning some topics has improved, especially the topic of women in Islam and plurality.
- Candidates need to focus specifically on the words of the question.
- Defining the terms of the question in the introductory paragraph made for effective answers.
- Quotations, especially from the Qur'an and Hadith, helped provide evidence of detailed knowledge and understanding.

General comments

Most candidates wrote long and detailed responses, which were noticeably more thorough than in previous years, containing dense amounts of factual information demonstrating a high degree of knowledge.

There was an improvement in the way candidates addressed the specific demands of each question. Many candidates now are not just writing what they know about a topic but linking each paragraph they write to the terms in the question. Answers can be improved by developing each point made in different paragraphs, supported with examples.

Quotations made from the Qur'an and Hadith and to the views of scholars were more relevant.

Another feature of the best answers was that they were clear on what the terms in the question meant, and often defined them at the outset of their answer. Able candidates might further improve their answers by noticing finer points, exceptions to general points, and pointing out complexity and diversity where it is found.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

'Women have the same rights as men in Islam.' Discuss.

This was a popular question. Many candidates were able to achieve the higher levels for the levels of response marking.

The best answers were those with alternative responses to the question, looking at the question in different ways. This was done mainly in two ways; either, by saying that women have more rights than men with examples given to support this, for example exemptions benefitting women (such as not have to pray or fast when in menstruation and after child-birth); or by presenting alternative points of view, for example that men seem to have an advantage over women (such as some interpreting Qur'an 4.34 (especially the word *qiwamah* meaning 'a degree above in strength') as men having control over women). This was a common example found in many responses, as were the laws of inheritance, *hijab*, men being permitted 4 wives and divorce. Discussion of these examples (e.g. whether they are protective or oppressive) and relevant quotes from both Qur'an and Hadith achieved the higher levels.

The best answers discussed that the mistreatment of women, whether in the form of domestic abuse, segregation, preventing access to education or involvement in society, could be a result of patriarchal culture and traditions found in some societies rather than Islamic teachings.

Overall different points of view were offered which enabled candidates to achieve the higher levels. Writing about the low status of women in pre-Islamic Arabia and how Islam gave rights to women was not relevant to this question.

Question 2

To what extent does Islam support democratic rule? Discuss by referring to the rule of the Four Rightly-Guided Caliphs.

This question was well answered by candidates. Many of the responses covered aspects of the rules of the four Caliphs that showed examples of democracy, such as the Caliphs being chosen by the people and not self-appointed, the use of consultation (*shura*) in decision-making, posting non-Muslims to important posts instead of favouring only Muslims. Others mentioned religious freedom granted to non-Muslims, the use of a financial institution (*Bait-ul-Maal*) for public welfare, and the freedom of the people to criticise those in power. Examples were used to show that the Caliphs did not consider themselves above other citizens or above the law. Good responses included alternative views, such as where non-Muslims did not benefit from the same rights as Muslims (the *dhimmi* contract).

To achieve the higher levels candidates needed to refer to the Four Rightly-Guided Caliphs in their answer, addressing the question not just giving general reference.

Question 3

'Freedom of expression is important for Muslims in a plural society.' Evaluate this statement.

This was not a very popular question with candidates. Many candidates did not address the question well, they understood 'freedom of expression' to mean freedom to express one's religious identity but did not refer to free speech.

Some candidates showed the importance of being able to express religious identity in countries where Muslims are a minority. Reference was also made to countries where Muslims are a majority, where Muslims are denied the freedom to express their views against the governments which sometimes lead to riots. Some answers included how Muslims have a right to express their views towards policies which they find discriminating or unjust, whether they live in Muslim countries or non-Muslim countries.

Some candidates wrote about alternative views, for example that freedom of expression can be harmful when used in the wrong way. Also, the rise of social media has led to more awareness of what is happening around the world and has led to protests throughout the world.

Some responses gave examples from the time of Muhammad (pbuh) and the Four Rightly-Guided Caliphs, who fostered a community based on co-operation, mutual respect, religious tolerance and peaceful co-existence, showing that freedom of expression was a core component of early Islamic societies.