

ISLAMIC STUDIES

Paper 9488/12
Written Paper 12

Key messages

Most candidates performed well. Overall, a range of responses were seen.

As well as discussing the question, alternative views for the evaluation (AO2) part questions allows candidates to access the higher levels and candidates should be more encouraged to do this.

Candidates performed equally well on all questions.

Time management is improving, and the number of rubric errors has decreased.

General comments

Candidates showed good knowledge of the life of the Prophet (pbuh), which is required in **Question 1**.

Answers for the evaluative part of questions are improving, candidates are discussing topics more and more.

General knowledge and examples from the current time are being used wisely by candidates.

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

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

- (a) This question was very well answered, and most candidates scored highly. This is a short answer question and long answers are not appropriate. Candidates need to explain the teachings of the Hadith in their own words rather than repeat the words from the passage.
- (b) Again, this question was very well answered. The best responses named members of the Prophet's family who had died and gave examples of how he dealt with each loss, such as the grief he experienced, but also wrote that he remained committed to the promotion of Islam. From the deaths mentioned Abu Talib's and Khadija's were the most popular, a few candidates also mentioned the death of his son Ibrahim, his uncle Hamza and the first martyrs of Islam, Sumayya and Yassir.

Responses needed to be more than just description of the events around the deaths of family and friends. Some responses could have been improved by including the Prophet's reaction to these events. Responses that did not include reference to the verse stated in the question were unable to achieve the highest levels of response.

- (c) This question was well answered generally. Some wrote about the perspective that remembering the dead is an example and inspiration for the living. Others discussed remembrance of dead relatives or friends by mentioning the rites of burial and visiting graves and debated how far this was a practice which should or should not be accepted by Muslims.

Good responses also included prayers of forgiveness and salvation for the dead people, as well as giving charity on their behalf. Actions that are performed by Muslims around the world to honour their dead were discussed in detail, as well as the validity of these actions.

Candidates have improved their references to different points of view, as evidenced by responses to this question.

Question 2

- (a) This was a popular question, and it was reasonably well answered with examples given. Some responses quoted the Hadith that all actions are judged according to the intentions behind them, which was a good start to answers. Specific intentions, such as before Hajj, for specific prayer or any other action, were also explained in the context of serving God and developing a sense of God-consciousness (*taqwa*) in daily life. Consequences of having the wrong intention, such as the deeds being rejected or nullified, were also well explained.
- (b) Many candidates wrote general answers about the importance of fasting; not whether it was private or not. Some argued that fasting was a private act of worship and gave ways in which it was private; for example by developing God-consciousness (*taqwa*) or by saying the night prayers (*Tahajjud* or *Taraweeh*). Some candidates went on to show ways in which fasting was not private, for example having meals (*Suhoor* and *Iftar*) in a gathering of people. This partially answered the question and enabled the candidates to give different perspectives and develop a discussion.

Better answers wrote about the word 'most' and developed discussion about whether other acts such as prayer (*salah*) or Hajj, or aspects of them such as making personal requests to God (*du'a*), were more private or not.

Alternative viewpoints which were discussed improved the standard of the responses.

Question 3

- (a) Candidates answered this question reasonably well. Most responses focused on the Qur'an as a revealed word of God and how it acts as a guidance to humans in all walks of life from birth to death, whether it be how to worship God, or marriage/divorce, and so on. Some responses were about how Hadiths complement the Qur'an in giving guidance, but this was not what the question was asking for. Weak responses did not focus on the words of the question, such as 'acts as guidance' and wrote about the general benefits of reading the Qur'an.

Answers could be improved with the occasional quote or example, as some wrote in general terms. Another way of answering the question was to show how the revealed word of God can be used to guide Islamic scholars together with other sources.

- (b) This was well answered. The best responses detailed what prayer for guidance was specifically, as opposed to general daily prayers. Candidates then discussed 'necessary', in other words, something which Muslims really need or must do.

One perspective was that Muslims do need to ask for guidance to ensure that God is central to their decisions. Another was that it is a must at certain times, such as making big decisions, but not at others. Another perspective was that it is not necessary because it is not part of the compulsory actions such as the Five Pillars of Islam, however doing so has its advantages.

It was important that candidates did not confuse personal prayer (*du'a*), which is referred to in this question, with the five daily prayers (*salah*).

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Paper 9488/22
Written Paper 22

Key messages

- Candidates performed well in this examination and showed good knowledge of the topics.
- Standards of discussion and evaluation have improved.
- Knowledge appeared equally strong across all areas of the syllabus examined in Paper 22 and answers were seen for all questions, showing a good balance across the different sections.
- 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 might improve their answers by clearly naming a school of thought and giving specific details about the position held by that school, especially for AO1 questions where this is referred to.
- Occasional quotations could improve some answers, illustrating points made and showing evidence of good knowledge of topics. Where done, it is important to be precise (for example, where referring to the Qur'an, ensure it is the Qur'an and not the Hadith being quoted).
- Unpacking statements and defining the key words in AO2 questions made for clearer, sharper introductions.
- Many candidates did not draw together their arguments to make conclusions – this could be a way of improving AO2 answers and where done effectively, they clearly show that a topic has been understood and the skill of discussion and argument satisfied.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

- (a) Candidates performed reasonably well with this short, five-mark question. The question only required five examples to be given, not explained, so no extra marks were available for more detail. The most appropriate answers were therefore short and to the point, keeping to the examples. Candidates rightly identified bank loans which needed to be repaid with interest or extra, or some simple words where this is made clear. Hire purchase type agreements were mentioned, as were trading arrangements in goods where additional goods were given to repay as a form of interest repayment. The word 'loan' itself was insufficient, as loans may be given with or without interest.
- (b) Candidates' answers have improved, with most specifically referring to one school of thought in their answer. There can be many topics on which different schools almost completely agree, but it is still important for candidates to show they have read about one school of thought and identify it in their answer. Many referred to the way their chosen school interpreted Qur'an and Hadith textual references. Good responses quoted one or more relevant text about interest and interest repayment. Some candidates also included comments by scholars, which was very good and showed they had thought about application of those teachings to situations scholars had advised upon. Other candidates need to be more specific and refer to a school of thought; some might improve their answers by referring to specific sources the school of thought uses – especially the Qur'an and Hadith. When doing so, it is important to be accurate and not attribute something incorrectly to the Qur'an when it has in fact come from the Hadith.

- (c) This was an open-ended question and candidates were able to consider situations they knew about. Some referred to housing crises and shortage of homes, making it difficult for Muslims to gain a place to stay unless they took on a mortgage. Some noted that alternative 'mortgages' are sometimes available with Islamic banks in profit share type agreements rather than interest repayments, which might be considered approved (*halal*). Some wrote that out of necessity a Muslim might consider a mortgage but try to avoid it, if possible, due to the risk and financial commitment. The point was made that making deals according to God's approved methods might lead to success, even if that caused issues in the short term. A few candidates misunderstood the scope of mortgages and thought they also referred to car loans and other sorts of loans.

Question 2

- (a) This was a popular question. Most candidates achieved full marks. Candidates referred to specific actions such as daily prayer rituals, ablution, method of pilgrimage (*Hajj* and *Umrah*), using miswak, smiling, marriage (*nikah*), charity, the manner of entering and leaving the toilet with left and right foot respectively, sleeping on your right side, eating with your right hand, and saying '*bismillah*' before doing anything. As a short five-mark question, it was important for candidates to be brief.
- (b) Good responses clearly defined what strong Hadith (*sahih*) are and went on to give examples from the school of thought they chose, to show how the scholars had worked these into their writings of guidance for Muslims to follow. Answers were better where the candidates could name the school of thought or approach they were referring to. Weaker responses gave more generalised answers without any references.
- (c) This was reasonably well answered. Strong responses recognised there were different interpretations possible, whereas weaker ones tended to argue that they should not be used at all. Some noted that weak Hadith (*da'if*) might cover topics no other Hadith did, or that they might be weak due to a missing link in the chain but not necessarily any doubt over the consistency of the content. Some might concur with established Hadith and therefore be looked at by scholars or maybe referenced in addition to known sources, rather than completely disregarded.

Question 3

- (a) Many candidates focused on the Qur'an being the word of God because of its language and the past and future events it describes. Many mentioned signs of the end of the world, scientific facts in the Qur'an and miracles mentioned of previous prophets. Few mentioned the evidence in the text itself which mentions its own authority as the word of God, which many take as literal truth without need of further evidence. Some engaged in discussion with the word '*wahy*', Arabic for revelation from God in various ways, and gave some details about how this could be justified with regards to the Qur'an. Some candidates answered this from the point of view of al-Ash'ari and Mu'tazilah theology, which were also valid perspectives.
- (b) The best responses unpacked the statement. Most candidates understood the words about there being different interpretations. The very strongest were aware that some verses might be interpreted in different ways, such as literally or allegorically. It was then necessary to go on and discuss authority. Some argued that the word 'challenge' suggests to confront or even deny, following beliefs outside the fold of Islam. Those of different viewpoint still share the same common core beliefs of Islam, including in the Qur'an, so therefore the differences of interpretation do not matter. Against this, others argued that if a Muslim does not believe the Qur'an is the literal word of God, then there might be more flexibility in their mind to interpret its teachings. This might mean they might be less inclined to recognise its authority in the same way. Clear responses then came to an overall conclusion – something most candidates could include to improve their work.

Question 4

- (a) Most answers referred to one, named school of thought and were best when they were specific. Some referred to Ibn Hanbal, some to the Hanafi and Shafi'i schools of thought. After al-Ghazali's time it was said that the 'gates of *ijtihad*' had closed. This means that the criteria for interpreting teachings were much more restricted, and details needed to be given.

Some candidates might improve their answers by being specific and naming a school of thought. For this topic schools take differing approaches, so it is important to be accurate.

- (b) Some argued that it was not only valid but necessary. Individual interpretation of teachings (*ijtihad*) helps Muslims answer new questions which have arisen from issues arising in modern society. As society has changed so much with new technology, healthcare and issues of living in multicultural societies, new interpretations are needed to address these issues. Others argued that the early Muslim community exercised individual interpretation because many of them were companions (*sahaba*) of the Prophet (pbuh) and knew what he would have done, so were qualified to make individual interpretations, whereas there is much distance between this knowledge and today, so interpretations made today are no longer valid.

Weaker responses jumped to conclusions, but more thoughtful responses gave detail and considered several different points, before making an overall judgement focusing in on the words 'valid' and 'today', to draw the discussion back to the statement and make a personal response. Focus on the key words in the question or statement was achieved by the strongest candidates and could be practiced further by others to improve their answers.

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Paper 9488/32
Written Paper 32

Key messages

- The topics of the Umayyads and features of mosques were the most popular choices of question. Knowledge of the Abbasids could be improved.
- There was use of specific terms, including for features of mosques and signs in the natural world in **Section B**. Definitions of more terms would help to achieve higher levels.
- Candidates that brought their arguments together at the end of their responses often achieved the higher levels because they made clear their response and rounded off their essays with appropriate concluding remarks.

General comments

- Candidates performed well in this paper. Knowledge and understanding of the different parts of the syllabus were good.
- Candidates need to refer to the sources in **Section A**, without doing so they could not achieve the higher levels of response as the question specifically instructed candidates to address these sources.
- Candidates should ensure they address the statement set, especially for AO2 **part (b)** questions.
- The structure of discussion has improved and could improve still further if candidates clearly show what they mean and support it with examples and explanation, point by point.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

- (a) Most candidates specifically addressed the source in this question. Many started by noting the coins and could see evidence in them that the style developed and showed interaction outside the area known as the birthplace of Islam. Interaction with the Roman Byzantine style of coinage reflected the expansion of the Caliphate and the success of Islam in trade. This helps candidates to start off their answer and go on to describe trading under the Umayyads as well as education policies. A few candidates still did not specifically refer to the source and so could not achieve the highest level of response as this was a requirement stated in the question. Candidates were strong in their knowledge of education under the Umayyads.
- (b) The best responses noted that different policies were important in different ways. Military policies helped expansion and so were linked to religious policies as more people converted to Islam. Different Caliphs could be said to prioritise different policies. Umar II was noted as a more religious Umayyad Caliph, whereas some others were less religious, and so put less priority on religious policies. An overall summing up of the different points made helped to round off answers.

Some candidates answered a question about whether the Umayyads were religious or not, this was not the question set. Candidates need to address the specific words in the statement/question given. Candidates could start by defining the terms in the statements/questions given and set out the issues as they see them.

Question 2

- (a) Candidates recognised a scholarly discussion and identified Socrates as Greek but could have made more of the source. The source shows Socrates, an ancient Greek philosopher, in an Arabic manuscript. He is in conversation with Arabs or Muslims. This shows that the Muslims translated

Greek works, and more than that, the illustration of the conversation suggests that they engaged with ancient Greek philosophical conversation. It might also be argued that Socrates is shown as being alongside Arabs as one of them, suggesting that his ideas had become part of mainstream Muslim scholarly conversation. Candidates knew more details about the translation movement itself and the House of Wisdom library in Baghdad, where many works from different parts of the world were gathered and translated, helping to preserve, pass on and develop knowledge further.

- (b) There were many good answers to this question but to achieve the higher levels of response candidates needed to focus their discussion using a variety of perspectives and then drawing them together with a clear and balanced conclusion. The best answers were about how Baghdad, the 'Abbasid capital, was a centre of scholarship and philosophical discussion. This showed openness to other traditions which was important in generating the climate in which these discussions could take place. Many of the scientific works produced included openness to learning from ancient Greek and other traditions, which helped Abbasid era scientists and scholars to succeed.

However, it could be argued that openness was limited and the 'Abbasid period was a time when Islamic Shariah schools were defined, and the limits of discussion laid down. Some candidates took the view that this meant the 'Abbasid success was due to the flourishing of Islamic scholarship and its inherent strength, rather than openness to others.

Question 3

- (a) Candidates explained that all life is part of God's predestined plan, so they see signs in everything. The Qur'an encourages Muslims to look at signs in the natural world and think about them, because they have been sent by God to help Muslims strengthen their beliefs. Candidates might learn and quote one or two verses from the Qur'an about signs, such as 13:2, 6:99 and 41:53. Philosopher Ibn Tufayl wrote about deriving belief using signs from the natural world and many referred to this and accurately described his contribution. Muslims are expected to be guardians/viceregents of the world which God has created, so they might interpret environmental problems as signs that humanity has neglected this duty. Candidates might further explore the meaning and interpretation of viceregents and explore this in relation to signs in the environment today.
- (b) Many candidates argued that revelations were much clearer and set rules which Muslims should not cross. Interpreting signs in nature was more difficult to set clear boundaries. Revelations may refer specifically to the Qur'an, which contains some verses which are clear and some which may appear less clear, as referred to in the Qur'an 3.7. This is a helpful verse for candidates to quote.

On the other hand, some mentioned that revelations were not always clear and sometimes made vague reference to things; in addition to which modern circumstances were not always covered. It could be argued, then, that signs in the natural world around are clearer: such as when Muslims see success or failure, or apparent immorality leading to failure or decline, these might be seen as clearer signs to reason with. Candidates did well to engage with some of the issues.

Question 4

- (a) Many candidates began their answers by writing about the physical features of mosques they had studied, but without organising their answer or referring to Islamic beliefs. Stronger responses defined briefly Islamic beliefs, then outlined a few features that they then went on to explain. Specific terminology, such as mihrab, mimbar, minaret and so on, was appropriate and should be used accurately to demonstrate thorough knowledge and understanding of the topic. Candidates had clearly learned in detail about one or more famous mosques and could describe features about the artwork, calligraphy and so on which were specific to that building. The best answers went on to explain how each identified feature illustrated beliefs in a functional or symbolic way.
- (b) Many candidates referred to a second mosque, but some did not name one. It is a requirement of the syllabus to study two, so it was expected that candidates could specifically identify a second mosque to use as a comparison. Making those comparisons and making a judgement at the end of the answer as an overall conclusion was required, many candidates only partially managed to do so. The majority of candidates compared some features in the body of their essay without making that judgement at the end.

ISLAMIC STUDIES

Paper 9488/42
Written Paper 42

Key messages

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

Quotations, especially from the Qur'an and Hadith, would help improve answers

Answers do not have to be very long to earn marks, concise answers can achieve the highest levels of response if they are relevant.

Time management is improving, and the number of rubric errors has decreased.

General comments

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

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

To improve responses candidates should link their answer to the terms in the question, rather than writing in a general manner and by focussing on the key terms.

Inclusion of quotations from the Qur'an and Hadith and reference to the views of scholars, helps answers achieve the higher levels of response and should be encouraged in answers.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

There were many good responses mentioning problems of clothing, hijab, accessing halal food, problems getting employment, issues of prejudice and so on. Some mentioned the expected burdens of looking after an extended family according to traditional practices, as well as trying to fit in with the norms of the culture of society. Some responses were about the challenges of Muslim women generally and did not give any concrete examples, but better answers focused on examples from two or more named countries. Some responses, however, did not refer to countries where Muslims form a minority as the question asked, and referred instead to Muslim-majority countries, such as Malaysia and Indonesia, making the answers irrelevant.

Some weak responses were about general challenges that Muslims (whether men or women) face when living in Muslim minority countries, and so the focus was not on Muslim women as the question asked. Others wrote about the challenges that women met before the arrival of Islam and how this changed with the Prophet (pbuh), but this was not relevant to the question.

Question 2

There were some very good responses citing examples such as Syed Abul A'la Maududi, Hasan al-Banna and Allama Iqbal, although it was the question least answered. Other more recent leaders, such as the former President of Mauritius, the current president of Turkey, or the leader of Iran were also chosen as contemporary leaders. Some responses did not refer to named examples and could not therefore achieve

the higher levels of response. Answers needed to mention the leaders and then discuss their contribution to the development of Muslim practice.

Although some lessons could be drawn from early Muslim leaders, such as the Prophet (pbuh), the Four Rightly-Guided Caliphs, or Umar II, candidates needed to write specifically about contemporary leaders in order to address the question. Muslim practice included direct preaching and interpretation of practices such as prayer, and interaction in the political arena in order to further the interest of Muslim practice.

Question 3

This was a popular question which was well answered. Some argued that pious Muslims would inevitably appeal more to other Muslims, who would naturally turn to them for leadership. Others made the point that piety promotes morality, including honesty and fair treatment of all regardless of religion, so that can enable Muslims to lead non-Muslims as well and to be accepted by them.

References 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 mention any time-frame.

The word 'effective' needed to be addressed but was not discussed in some responses which were more general about how Muslims lead Muslims and non-Muslims. The word 'extent' which was the focus of the question was also not taken into consideration by some. While it is fair to say that it can be completely effective, alternative views, such as it is effective in some contexts and not in others would have added more depth to the responses.

Very good answers referred to examples from various countries.