

ISLAMIYAT

Paper 0493/11

Paper 1

General Comments

The standard of this paper was comparable to last year, however it was noted that there was not as much consistency in the quality of answers within the papers. So candidates may have answered one or two questions in depth, but the other questions not so well.

The best answers wrote clearly focused paragraphs. The opening to a paragraph should make a clear point addressing directly the wording of the question, rather than writing in general about the topic.

Candidates are to be reminded of the need to write legibly in black ink and to ensure their handwriting is easily readable by the average reader. There was an increase in the number of scripts referred to the Principal Examiner to mark due to poor handwriting.

Comments on Specific Questions

Question 1

On the whole there have been some improvements with the way this question has been answered. Candidates are beginning to grasp the difference between **part (a)** and **part (b)** and are starting to apply the teachings to life today in the second part.

There are still many candidates who have the tendency to write general answers about themes relating to the nature of God, often giving a learned answer about the nature of God and so only gaining marks for the general bits of information relevant to that sura. The majority of candidates also, in **part (b)**, ignore the word 'today' in the question, and give general answers about what Muslims should do, e.g. pray more, be good to others, or they simply repeat the themes they have written about in **part (a)**.

The best responses gave specific examples, in addition to general principles, that could be applied in life today, e.g. when faced with mockery and ridicule, such as when people draw cartoons of the Prophet Muhammad, Muslims should behave like the Prophet and not react with anger but turn to God for help, or, when Muslims see miraculous feats like the moon landings or space travel, they should marvel at these knowing that it is God that allows them to happen, and so it should strengthen a person's faith in Him.

Question 2

- (a) This question was answered reasonably well with most candidates being able to give some examples of the different ways and times that revelation came to the Prophet. Many candidates, though, gave examples but without elaboration and so would not have been able to gain higher levels. For example they may have mentioned that the revelation sometimes weighed heavily on the Prophet, but they would not give examples of this happening.

There was a bit of variation in how this question was interpreted, with some focusing on the difference between the revelations in Makka and Madina and others focusing on the different ways the Angel Jibril brought the revelation. The best answers had a balance between the two, mentioning the event and expanding on it with details and relevant verses.

Weaker responses focused on the first revelation in the Cave of Hira.

- (b) This was answered reasonably well. Good answers were able to say that the oral tradition of the Arabs allowed the Qur'an to be committed to memory and made it easier to preserve and that the Prophet would not have been able to read the message had it been given in written form – that ensured that he could not be accused of writing it himself.

Weaker answers gave simple statements such as 'the Prophet would not have been able to read it' without any attempt to show the significance of this.

Question 3

This was a popular question and varied a lot in how it was answered.

- (a) Most candidates were able to identify that there was a change in the attitude of the Quraysh before the revelation and after. However, there were only a small number of really good answers that wrote in detail about the good relations before revelation, giving examples of the trust the Quraysh had for the Prophet and narrating the story of the placing of the black stone and then went on to give details about the change in relations and the persecutions the Prophet faced. Most candidates briefly mentioned that the relationship before revelation was good, but did not give details, and then went on to write in depth about the persecutions.

Weaker answers wrote only about the persecution. A small but significant minority did not seem to understand the question and wrote about the Prophet's relationship with Khadija and Abu Talib. It is recommended that candidates distinguish the different periods of revelation and the chronology of prophethood to ensure they focus on the right periods demanded by the question set.

- (b) This was averagely answered. Most gave satisfactory answers saying that the Quraysh still trusted the Prophet.

A few good answers were able to say that the threat that the Quraysh felt over the new faith was social and political, and they rejected it for those reasons, not because they felt the message was wrong or that the Prophet was a liar.

Question 4

- (a) This was the least popular question and not very well answered.

A small number of good answers were able to write about the Makkans' arrival in Madina, the Prophet pairing the Ansar and Muhajirun, giving details about the pairings, that the Ansar offered their property and wealth, e.g. Sa'd bin ar-Rabi and Abdur Rahman bin Awf. Many Makkans refused the offers preferring to work themselves, for example working in the date orchards for dates rather than being given the dates for free.

Most answers, however, wrote about the pairings without giving many details about what the Ansar were willing to share, instead giving general answers about sharing wealth and divorcing wives. Very little was written about which Emigrants were paired with which Helpers, and most answers did not mention what the Emigrants did for the Ansar or what kind of work they did for themselves.

- (b) This question inspired the best responses out of all the **part (b)** questions.

Better answers understood the significance of the question and gave examples referring to current events. For example, many candidates wrote about the migrants who had crossed the border to Pakistan from Afghanistan, and that they were helped with food and shelter. Some also wrote about the plight of the Syrians saying that neighbouring Muslims should go to their aid and help them with shelter and work.

Weaker answers gave general answers about helping people in need, or helping people now by giving them money.

Question 5

This was a popular question and was answered consistently well.

- (a) Most candidates knew the main outline of 'Umar's life and wrote a good chronology of events.

The best answers wrote in detail about him confronting his sister and his own conversion, his openness in worship which gave the Muslims strength, his emigration, that he did not emigrate in secret, as well as giving details about the battles that he fought in. They also wrote about his initial disapproval of the Treaty of Hdaybiyah and his grief at the Prophet's death.

Excellent answers elaborated on the events mentioned above, as well as giving details about his life before he became Muslim and gave relevant quotations from his life.

- (b) Many candidates wrote good answers about 'Umar's conversion allowing Muslims to understand that even those who seem to be the fiercest opponents of Islam can still change and so Muslims should never lose hope in people and should pray for them.

Key Messages

- Candidates should write clearly and legibly.
- Questions should be clearly labelled.
- Extra sheets should be numbered and labelled correctly.
- Paragraphs should be separated.
- The whole question should be read carefully before answering.
- Facts should not just be listed but they should be elaborated on, giving considerable detail for the top level.
- **Part (b)** questions should try to include contemporary examples/analogies, where possible and if relevant to the question.

ISLAMIYAT

Paper 0493/12

Paper 1

General Comments

The general quality of answers was comparable to last year.

The best answers wrote clearly focused paragraphs. The opening to a paragraph should make a clear point addressing directly the wording of the question, rather than writing in general about the topic.

Candidates are to be reminded of the need to write legibly in black ink and to ensure their handwriting is easily readable by the average reader. There was an increase in the number of scripts referred to the Principal Examiner to mark due to poor handwriting.

Comments on Specific Questions

Question 1

On the whole there have been some improvements with the way this question has been answered. Candidates are beginning to grasp the difference between **part (a)** and **part (b)** and are starting to apply the teachings to life today in the second part.

There are still many candidates who have the tendency to write general answers about themes relating to the nature of God, often giving a learned answer about the nature of God and so only gaining marks for the general bits of information relevant to that sura. The majority of candidates also, in **part (b)**, ignore the word 'today' in the question, and give general answers about what Muslims should do, e.g. pray more, be good to others, or they simply repeat the themes they have written about in **part (a)**.

The best responses gave specific examples, in addition to general principles, that could be applied in life today, e.g. Muslims should not believe in the power of their material possessions, or live their life influenced by the behaviour of celebrities which occupy the time of many people today.

Question 2

(a) This question was answered quite well and most candidates understood the question with clear demonstration of the Qur'anic passages from the syllabus, many of whom quoted relevant ayats to support their answers. A small minority did not provide coherent answers to the question, simply stringing quotations together without any clear focus on the topic. The best answers to this question on the Qur'an were well written and informative.

Good candidates used the prescribed passages to give thorough and detailed answers about the joint responsibilities of God and humans. Some candidates did not make reference to specific suras but wrote good, general answers about the joint responsibility, obviously drawing on the teachings in the suras but not mentioning them.

Weaker responses focused on the message of the Qur'an in general, rather than focusing specifically on the roles of God and humankind. Many answers focused on the responsibilities of God, or humans, but not both, thereby missing the opportunity for high levels.

(b) The question referred to the Qur'an's teaching about responsibility towards the environment. Some candidates made a good attempt at speaking of the environment being part of God's blessings towards us and so, in that sense, it should be nurtured and taken care of. Some candidates also talked about the immediate environment that is people living around them who deserve good

treatment, among whom are the poor and orphans. The best responses explained the role of humankind as vice sergeants on earth, with a role to look after God's creation, and supported their answers with references from the Qur'an.

Weaker candidates often missed the opportunity to apply the teaching to contemporary issues. Many were content to just make reference to 'looking after God's creation'. Some answers had no religious content. A number of candidates answered as if the question was asking them to agree that there were teachings in the Qur'an about the environment.

Generally, few candidates were able to give an in depth answer that included both reasons and means to preserve the environment.

Question 3

- (a) This question was generally well answered, although many candidates who were able to identify the three stages of secret preaching were not able to develop them with equal depth. Good answers wrote about the first stage with the people close to him converting to Islam, and many were able to name the first prominent companions. For the second and third stages, inviting the clan to his house and then preaching from Mount Safa, the details were lacking, although many candidates were able to reference the relevant Qur'anic verses. There was a lot of unnecessary information written about the persecutions that followed, even within the better answers.

The best responses clearly defined the time period referenced here. This was from the Night of Power onwards, during the early years of the Prophet's preaching. The focus of the question did not extend to the Hijra to Madina or the emigration to Abyssinia; and its main focus was on preaching prior to the starting of persecutions. It is recommended that Centres distinguish the different periods of revelation and the chronology of prophethood to ensure candidates focus on the right periods demanded by the question set.

- (b) This part was generally well answered. Good, perceptive answers evaluated not only the danger the early Muslims were in but also the need for the Prophet to gain confidence and fully understand the message before preaching publicly. Most candidates also pointed out that he waited for God's guidance before preaching openly. Better answers said that change needs to be gradual and requires time and that it gave the Prophet time to plan for strategies for when he will go public. Satisfactory attempts were mostly an explanation of the threat of persecution from the Quraysh. Also lacking was mention of how this new faith would mean a real threat to the financial well-being of the Quraysh in terms of the trade they controlled. Not many candidates made this point.

Very few candidates said it was not significant and the reason given was because Islam is a religion that needs to be spread to all the world and not to be kept to a few people.

Question 4

- (a) This was a popular question and generally very well answered.

The best answers structured their response well giving good, chronological details and a balance of information between both battles, as well as details such as the Prophet saying: 'Tomorrow I will choose someone to lead the army who loves Allah and whom Allah loves' (Khaybar); the names of Harith bin Umayr, the envoy killed or of Sharhbil Al Ghassani (Muta); that the Prophet asked Abbas to call the Muslims back at Hunain; that the battle of Tabuk did not actually occur.

Quite often, even within otherwise good answers, candidates mixed up details of Tabuk and Hunain and many said that the Muslims fought the Byzantines at Tabuk and defeated them. Satisfactory answers gave general details about both battles chosen.

Candidates did not always make it clear which battle they were writing about, did not separate the narrations of the two battles, and provided one answer for two separate events which meant their answers were not clear.

- (b) The best responses clearly defined a principle learned from battle and went on to give specific examples of how that could be applied today. Good candidates explained the event where the leadership skill was shown and derived lessons for today's leaders, among which were to lead the

army from the front, not to let difficult conditions deter them from fighting, to retreat if necessary to save lives.

Better candidates gave examples of Palestine or Nepal, or suggested that Muslim leaders should go and fight against the Taliban. Others highlighted the principle of warfare being something that was defensive and not aggressive and some candidates picked up on the lesson of mercy highlighting the teaching that 'if your enemy inclines to peace' you too should take that path.

A large number of answers were undeveloped statements about Muslims generally needing to be steadfast and have faith in God. Candidates who chose a different battle than the ones selected for **part (a)** spent too much time on the description of events before concluding, usually, with a simple statement such as, e.g. Tabuk – Muslims should donate in the cause of God.

Question 5

- (a) Most of the candidates' answers were average, with limited knowledge of Aisha's life, or they seemed to know about her life but lacked the detail for a good/excellent answer. Many answers wrote about her piety and good character without mentioning specific events from her life, such as the slander against her, the Qur'an verses that were revealed in connection to this incident, her participating in the battles, or her nursing the Prophet in his last days.

Excellent answers mentioned the above in detail, as well as details about her early marriage, her relationship with the other wives, her study and excellent memory and quoted relevant Qur'an verses.

There were some common inaccuracies, such as the necklace incident being confused with the incident where the verses of tayummum were revealed; stories of Khadija or Fatima that were referenced to Aisha instead; or her throwing a plate of food brought by one of the other wives.

- (b) Many candidates failed to score highly as they opted to give statements about Aisha's piety, or her loyalty to her husband, rather than commenting on how her character and accomplishments could be seen as an example for Muslim women today.

Where it was answered well, candidates showed excellent evaluation, e.g. in saying women now should acquire education despite the Taliban preventing them from so doing; Muslim women can learn that they should value education and pursue their independent thirst for knowledge by going to school and college and maintaining their Islamic right for education for girls just as much as boys; Aisha's participation in the battle of the camel shows women of today to take a more active part in society or to engage in politics.

Key Messages

- Candidates should write clearly and legibly.
- Questions should be clearly labelled.
- Extra sheets should be numbered and labelled correctly.
- Paragraphs should be separated.
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- Facts should not just be listed but they should be elaborated on, giving considerable detail for the top level.
- **Part (b)** questions should try to include contemporary examples/analogies, where possible.

ISLAMIYAT

Paper 0493/21

Paper 2

General Comments

Responses varied in this Paper. Some candidates were very able and well prepared and did well in the examination whilst other struggled e.g. in **Question 4** they could not distinguish between *Eid al-Adha* and *Eid al-Fitr* even though there was a mention of what acts pilgrims (*hajjis*) perform on the 10th of *Dhu al-Hijja* in the question, yet they wrote about *Eid al-Fitr* in their response or went on to say Muslims fast on this day. Also the candidates need to be reminded to indicate which part of the question they are writing about as they tended to go from one part into another without any indication. This was especially an issue when marking **Question 1** when there was repetition in the answer which made it difficult to distinguish between the two parts. In **Question 3** the method of *wudu* was generally answered better than the conditions of *wudu*. **Question 5** was a popular one and generally well answered.

Comments on Specific Questions

Question 1

When attempting this question, candidates can choose to answer the **part (a)** questions for both Hadiths together and both the **part (b)** questions together or they can do **part (a)** and **part (b)** together of each of the two selected Hadiths. However, they must state which Hadith they are attempting and write **(a)** or **(b)** before they launch into the answer. Also important is that in Paper 2, unlike Paper 1, the question is not asking for the importance of Hadiths in **part (b)** rather how Muslims can put the teachings into action. When this distinction is not made there are two sets of answers saying the same thing.

A large number who attempted to answer using Hadith 2 appeared not to grasp the teaching and so repeated the content of the Hadith using their own words.

Part (b) needs to be focused on how to put the teachings into action. Practical examples help develop the answer.

Question 2

For this answer candidates needed to write about the parts of the Hadith which are *isnad* and *matn* not the types or categories of Hadiths, which quite a few wrote about. Development of *isnad* and *matn* would have covered the checks made by the compilers and examples of how they went about collecting and authenticating Hadiths and would have added the detail needed to get to the top levels. Many who answered well were the ones who understood what the question was asking.

Part (b) was a question to which the candidates responded with good evaluative responses on the whole.

Question 3

Two things were being asked for in this question, they were the conditions and method of *wudu*. The second part was stronger in the majority of the answers. Accuracy in the response was looked at when awarding marks for the method of *wudu*. When writing about the importance of *wudu* in **part (b)**, some very good evaluation was included, e.g. candidates wrote that *wudu* helps a person to focus their mind on God and that it prepares them to come before their Creator etc. Some good quotes were given.

Question 4

Part (a) of this question was not asking about the rites of *hajj* but was only asking the candidates to write about the acts performed by pilgrims on the 10th of *Dhu al-Hijja* and how the rest of the *umma* celebrate this day. For the first part of the question it was important to name the correct places, and give accurate information about the order of the rites performed. The second part about the *umma* celebrating *Eid al-Adha* was answered better but some got that day mixed up with *Eid al-Fitr* and wrote about how this day is followed by fasting. Those who were prepared answered this question well.

Even some of those who were confused between *Eid al-Adha* and *Eid al-Fitr* managed to answer the **part (b)** question correct.

Question 5

This was a very popular question attempted well by many. The majority wrote about the false prophets and the compilation of the Qur'an for **part (a)** of the answer and it was the detail and development in the answers that achieved the higher levels. **Part (b)** was again well answered.

ISLAMIYAT

Paper 0493/22

Paper 2

General Comments

On the whole a good session in which the well prepared candidates did well and the not so well prepared made a good attempt at answering the questions set in the paper. For the response given in **Question 1**, the candidates, in order to achieve the higher levels, must distinguish between the two parts of the answers and not repeat the teachings they give in **part (a)** in **part (b)**. They should not put so much in **part (a)**, including examples, that they have nothing left to write for **part (b)**. In **Question 2** some candidates focused their answer on Hadiths which promote social cohesion, others focused on how the Pillars are put into practice with the guidance of Hadiths, whilst the more astute candidates referred to guidance given in both of the above mentioned areas as well as on legal issues. In **Question 3** after the statement the question clearly asked about how 'Umar ruled during his ten year caliphate. Some candidates misunderstood the question and wrote about his conquests at length, others wrote about both military and administrative achievements of 'Umar whilst the rest got straight into his administrative rule and secured the top levels. **Question 4** was a popular one, well attempted by the majority. **Question 5** had two aspects to it. Candidates needed to write about the practice of fasting and its moral benefits. Some candidates did not read the question carefully and wrote about either the practice or the moral benefits. **Part (b)** of this question was not asking for the general benefit of *zakat* but rather the benefits strictly to the giver. A lot of answers went off the point and wrote about the general benefits of *zakat*.

Comments on Specific Questions

Question 1

For **part (a)** a large number of candidates were restricting their answer to just the content of the Hadith and not understanding the wider meaning of what the Hadith was teaching. For example, for the first Hadith many answers included what the translation said, that prayer and fasting are important to perform in order to attain paradise. Whereas the wider meaning is that Islam is a simple religion to follow and by following the basic principles and staying away from what has been forbidden paradise is in the grasp of all Muslims.

For **part (b)** candidates do not need to reword the teachings in the Hadiths but give examples of how the teachings of the Hadiths can be put into action. Practical examples can be cited here.

Question 2

Some candidates put forward a really good answer where they wrote comprehensively about how Hadiths are a source of guidance in caring for the vulnerable in society, promoting brotherhood and unity amongst the *umma*, are a guide to putting faith into practice as well as helping in resolving legal issues. All these aspects were backed with examples and Hadiths and development to show the candidates' understanding of the points they were making. This is what was being looked for in the answers, a comprehensive approach. Unfortunately not all candidates were able to deliver the comprehensive answers and focused on one or two aspects which still achieved a good level.

For **part (b)** candidates had to focus on how belief without action is not complete. It is not enough to say that an integral Pillar of Islam is *salat*. A Muslim has to pray five times a day in order to put this belief into practice. Belief is only sincere when put into action. Quite a few candidates struggled with this part of the question. Those who grasped what the question was asking wrote some very good answers.

Question 3

For this question quite a few misread what was being asked and instead of writing about how 'Umar ruled during his ten year caliphate wrote about his conquests. Having said that, a large number of candidates did understand the question and achieved very good levels in this part of the answer.

For **part (b)** candidates were free to choose what they thought was his greatest achievement from either his military or administrative achievements. Many gave good evaluative responses and secured good levels.

Question 4

This was a popular question, very well answered by those who were well prepared. Most candidates managed a fairly good response. Answers quoted Sura Zilzaal and Sura Qariah to develop their answer, quite a few able candidates wrote about the lesser judgment as well as the final judgment before God.

In **part (b)** there were some excellent responses. Candidates very effectively wrote about how this belief makes Muslims God-conscious and how, because they know they will have to account before God, they try to lead more righteous lives.

Question 5

Some candidates did not read the question carefully enough and wrote only about the practice or the moral benefits of fasting.

For **part (b)** they had to write only about the benefits of alms giving to the giver. Many answers wrote about the benefits of *zakat* in general which was not being asked for. However wherever the answer was relevant to what was being asked the mark was given.

Conclusion

Spending the first five minutes of the examination in reading the question carefully will enable the candidates to gain higher levels. Also it will give them more time as they will write about what is being asked for and have time to develop the relevant points they make.