

ISLAMIYAT

Paper 0493/11
Paper 11

Key messages

- Answers must be written in clear handwriting, with questions parts labelled accurately, and in the designated space for the chosen question.
- If an answer exceeds the space provided, a continuation booklet may be used.
- The allocated marks and space provided for each question give a useful indication of the expected length and depth of an answer.
- **Part (a)** answers are knowledge-based and so require depth and detail.

General comments

Overall, the quality of answers was good. Some candidates offered in-depth answers for **Part (a)**. There were, however, a significant number who provided very brief answers, often lacking the breadth of knowledge and thoroughness required for higher marks.

Responses to understanding-based questions showed increasing levels of engagement. Many candidates made a good attempt to show understanding of the demands of the questions and to support their arguments with insightful examples.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

- (a) Ayat ul Kursi was the most popular passage selected by the candidates. Several key themes connected to God's omnipotence and omniscience were discussed by the candidates which allowed them to score high marks. For passage (ii), candidates who highlighted unique qualities of God mentioned in the passage and His mercy were successful. In passage (iii), better responses focused on the guidance and support offered to the prophets as well as Ibrahim's unwavering faith in God; both of which contributed to higher marks.

Responses that merely paraphrased the translation or offered generic, commonly mentioned themes were often limited to mid-range marks.

- (b) Many candidates gave some simplistic suggestions, such as believing in God or asking for His mercy and guidance. Candidates who selected specific themes from each passage and successfully explained how those themes could impact a Muslim's mind, beliefs and practical life scored higher marks.

Question 2

- (a) Candidates were required to describe God's relationship with His messengers, Jesus and Muhammad (pbuh).

The quality of responses varied. Weaker candidates provided general accounts of the lives of the two prophets. Better responses made a reference to the Sura Maida passage as well as Sura Kauther and Duha and discussed God's favours, with a focus on miracles granted to Isa and the support and consolation offered to the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh).

The strongest answers expanded the scope of the response, discussing God's overall role in the lives of His messengers. They highlighted the obedience and submission shown by the prophets as well as God's role as a Protector, Consoler, and Giver of miracles, knowledge and guidance.

- (b) Many candidates gave generalised responses, mentioning lessons such as patience, determination and unwavering faith in God. Stronger responses made clear links to the lives of prophets. These candidates were able to extract meaningful and specific lessons, such as how to remain optimistic, patient and resilient in real-life situations, drawing inspiration directly from the prophets' experiences.

Question 3

- (a) Candidates generally showed an awareness of the background to this event. Some candidates scoring lower marks went into excessive detail, covering all the events from the declaration of Prophethood to the imposition of boycott which was unnecessary.

Most candidates talked about the general terms of the boycott, the exile of Banu Hashim and Banu Abdul Muttalib into the gorge of Abi Talib, the subsequent hardships they endured and the removal of the boycott as well as the consequent death of Prophet's uncle and wife, scoring mid-range marks.

Stronger candidates gave precise details of the terms of the boycott and the efforts made by good-hearted and generous Makkans to help the Prophet's clan. The mention of prominent Makkans who protested and forced Abu Jahl, the main oppressor, to end the boycott helped elevate these answers.

- (b) Those who agreed with the statement talked about hardships faced and how they impacted the Prophet (pbuh). They discussed how the boycott halted the growth of Islam for a significant length of time and ultimately deprived the Prophet (pbuh) of moral and financial support in the form of his uncle and wife who died as a result. Those disagreeing with the statement referred to other events in the life of the Prophet (pbuh) which, in their view, had more serious repercussions for him and his mission and caused far greater pain and suffering.

Most candidates, however, only gave a descriptive account of the event without discussing why this event could be considered the worst time of his life, and consequently scored mid-range marks.

Question 4

- (a) Responses to this question varied significantly. Those candidates scoring higher marks focused not only on events that occurred after the arrival of Muslims in Madina, following the migration, but also specifically highlighted how each event contributed to community building, bringing different factions together and eliminating divisions.

Many candidates either listed every step taken by the Prophet (pbuh) in his first year in Madina without linking those actions to the creation of unity or took two main events, such as Muwakhhat (brotherhood) and Covenant of Madina, and threw light on their significance in creating a more united community, consequently scoring mid-range marks.

- (b) Some thoughtful and creative suggestions were made by candidates of how to improve community relations. Those who proposed innovative and empathetic ideas, such as avoiding discrimination based on race, colour or religion or suggested warm and inclusive ways to welcome new members into the community, scored higher marks. Candidates who made some generic suggestions such as being nice, kind and helpful, without supporting their ideas with specific examples, scored mid-range marks only.

Question 5

- (a) Candidates generally demonstrated knowledge of the most well-known events from the lives of the two companions, such as persecution faced by Bilal ibn Rabah and his role as the Prophet's muezzin and the events surrounding Hamza ibn Abdul Muttalib's martyrdom. Stronger responses included finer details from the lives of these two personalities which enabled them to achieve higher levels.
- (b) Candidates who offered generic suggestions, such as being patient or having trust in God, achieved mid-range marks. Stronger responses made specific and insightful references. For example, some mentioned Bilal ibn Rabah's struggle following the Prophet's death, making thoughtful deductions about how grief is natural and missing loved ones is nothing to be ashamed of. Others referred to Bilal ibn Rabah's migration from Madina, suggesting how various strategies can be used to cope with one's grief and loss.

Responses that discussed Hamza ibn Abdul Muttalib's martyrdom and drew lessons on forgiveness as a way to cope with grief also scored good marks.

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Paper 0493/12
Paper 12

Key messages

- Answers must be written in clear handwriting, with questions parts labelled accurately, and in the designated space for the chosen question.
- If an answer exceeds the space provided, a continuation booklet may be used.
- Any extra pages that are used must be clearly labelled.
- Candidates should take a few minutes to carefully read and clearly understand each question and its demands.
- Candidates would benefit from further guidance and practice with AO2 questions to help to ensure that their responses are focused and relevant throughout.

General comments

Overall, candidates performed fairly well. In knowledge-based questions, where responses required the recall of information, performance was stronger. Candidates found questions that required them to select and present information more challenging.

Similarly, in understanding-based questions, candidates often relied too heavily on factual recall rather than developing arguments, using examples or offering evaluation. At times, responses lacked coherence, ideas did not connect well, or arguments were not concluded in a thoughtful manner.

Further practice would significantly improve the overall quality of **Part (b)** part answers.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

- (a) Sura Ikhlas along with Sura Fatiha were the most popular choices. Many candidates were limited to mid-range marks because they either simply paraphrased the translation of the passages selected, mixed theses from different passages, confused the themes of Sura Ikhlas with Ayat ul Kursi, or did not offer enough elaboration for a selected theme.

Candidates who selected three or more specific themes from a passage and elaborated on them meaningfully achieved higher marks. An example was candidates discussing the theme of 'Ahad', 'Samad' and the concept of God having no progeny for Sura Ikhlas and supporting the last theme with relevant reference from the Quran. This approach demonstrated strong knowledge and achieved high marks.

- (b) Candidates who explored the themes of Sura Ikhlas as crystallising belief in the oneness of God, Sura Fatiha as a means of seeking God's mercy and guidance and Sura Duha as developing a sense of reliance on God during times of trials and hardships, and who expanded thoughtfully on these ideas, received higher marks.

Candidates who made simplistic suggestions about believing in one God, seeking His guidance or merely repeated the lessons learned scored mid-range marks only.

Question 2

- (a) Candidates were expected to highlight two key aspects using the passages mentioned in the question: God's blessings and His control.

Weaker responses often lacked structure with disjointed paragraphs discussing the creation of humans, the natural world, human accountability or protection offered to them by God, but with varying degrees of accuracy.

Most candidates made clear reference to each passage and identified some aspects of God's blessings and control. Many also discussed the responsibilities of Muslims which was not required by the question and scored mid-range marks as a result.

The strongest candidates clearly and correctly referenced each passage and identified multiple aspects of God's blessings and control. For example, from Sura Alaq, they discussed the creation of humans from insignificant material, the bestowal of knowledge and intellect, the granting of tools for learning and the provision of guidance through scriptures. Such depth and relevance enabled them to achieve higher marks.

Similarly, for Sura Zilzaal, stronger candidates were able to identify multiple aspects of God's control, such as His dominance over the created world and the power to destroy what He created, and His ability to restore order after the chaos of the Last Day. His role as the ultimate Judge, to whom all are accountable, was also highlighted for higher marks.

- (b) The majority of candidates often gave simplistic answers that focused mainly on the general duties of a good Muslim, without directly addressing the theme of gratitude. As a result, they scored mid-range marks.

Stronger responses were able to suggest some specific ways of showing gratitude to God, such as sharing the blessings with those in need, preserving natural resources and avoiding waste in addition to fulfilling God's commands.

Question 3

- (a) This question was answered well by the majority of candidates. Almost all were aware of the immediate cause of the Battle of Badr, namely Abu Sufian's trade caravan, while many also referred to the Nakhla incident.

Details such as the numbers and strength of forces on both sides, the events during the battle, and the aftermath were generally well described. Quoting references about God's support and assistance, mentioned in the Quran, helped answers reach the highest levels.

Candidates who missed essential details or lacked depth in certain areas commonly received lower marks.

- (b) Several thoughtful and well-developed responses were seen, highlighting the benefits of the Muslim victory at Badr. Common points included the strengthening of faith in God's support, the expansion of Islam, financial gains and literacy boost. Candidates who provided only a list of benefits without expansion or gave a mainly descriptive account scored mid-range marks.

Question 4

- (a) Candidates showed good awareness of the Prophet's attempt to spread Islam out of Madina. The letters to the Byzantine and Sassanid emperors, as well as the rulers of Egypt and Abyssinia, were the most popular aspects discussed in answers. Candidates who focused mainly on these letters and the reactions of the recipients tended to score mid-range marks.

Stronger responses also discussed rulers of Busra, Damascus, Bahrain and Yamama.

Exceptional responses included precise details such as the names of rulers invited, the emissaries sent to them and the specific reactions.

- (b) While many candidates considered the expansions of Islam as the most significant reason for sending these invitations, the most insightful answers emphasised the strategic goal of extending

Islam's influence beyond Hijaz and forming new alliances with regional powers surrounding Arabia. Such nuanced answers secured higher marks.

Question 5

- (a) Candidates generally answered the part of the question focusing on Abu Talib well, demonstrating knowledge of his role in the Prophet's life from his upbringing to teaching him life skills and providing protection and support. In contrast, very few candidates possessed sufficient knowledge of the life of Salman al-Farsi. The suggestion of defending Madina with a trench was the only widely known fact.

Candidates who provided a more balanced account, offering detailed insight into the lives of both personalities, generally secured higher marks.

- (b) Many responses repeated biographical information about Salman al-Farsi instead of drawing any meaningful lessons from his life. Those who did attempt to extract some lessons discussed the importance of offering sincere advice and equality across racial and social backgrounds. Some referred to his quest for a true religion and inquisitive nature and drew lessons about doing research and striving for the truth. The majority of candidates made some very simplistic suggestions about what Muslims can learn without clear reference to any specific aspect of Salman's life.

ISLAMIYAT

Paper 0493/21
Paper 21

Key messages

Candidates taking this examination generally performed well and demonstrated both knowledge and understanding. When candidates performed less well, this was often due to not understanding the question or confusing the content that they had learned. A clear example of this was **Question 4(a)**, where many candidates made the error of writing about the Day of Judgement and life after death instead of predestination.

General comments

Candidates are reminded to take care with handwriting so that answers are clear and legible.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

- (a) All four Hadiths were confidently answered by the candidates. Candidates wrote mature answers for Hadith 17 (on Modesty) and talked about the different aspects that modesty covers. It was the teachings touched upon in the answers and the detail given that determined the candidate's marks. Hadith 13 was a popular Hadith with candidates and they were able to highlight the teachings of the Hadith by writing about the importance of the Qur'an in a Muslims life. For Hadith 19, a key teaching is that the restrictions Islamic law (*shariah*) imposes on a believer makes them feel restricted as opposed to disbelievers. Hadith 12 also elicited fair responses.
- (b) In this part of the question, candidates must not repeat the teachings and instead should concentrate on how the given teachings in **Part (a)** can be acted upon. For Hadith 12, candidates could have given examples of how the four Caliphs ruled with justice and courage and how they upheld Islamic principles. Candidates could also have given examples from present times, for example on what modern day politicians should not do. Actions related to modesty could have covered points like living a simple lifestyle and not being extravagant when celebrating.

Question 2

- (a) This question was well attempted by candidates who responded in their own way. Some explained *qiyas*, gave the rules of *qiyas* and then followed this with two examples. Others briefly described *qiyas*, gave two examples and demonstrated their understanding of the rules of *qiyas* without using the words *asl*, *illa far* and *hukm*.
- Some candidates gave the account of the Prophet's conversation with Mu'adh ibn Jabal to expand on their answer, showing the Prophet's approval towards the practice of *qiyas*. Such details were read as development of the answer. In a few answers, examples of *ijma'* were confused with examples of *qiyas*.
- (b) The majority of answers to this question were of a good standard although there were some candidates who did not seem to understand the meaning of the word 'reluctant' or who misread the question as asking why Muslims use *qiyas*. This led to answers which were correct in terms of content but did not satisfactorily answer the question and so could not earn credit. Answers such as these could, at best, receive 1 mark for an attempt where some connection could be made between the question and the answer.

Question 3

- (a) This question asked candidates to write about the leadership qualities of the first Caliph. Stronger candidates highlighted his various achievements and connected them back to the question, commenting on how a chosen achievement reflected a leadership quality. Other candidates simply wrote an account of his various achievements; if these were then linked to his leadership qualities in the answer's conclusion, then they were credited with good marks.

It is important to understand the requirement of each question and to answer with precision. Those candidates who read the question as simply asking them to write about Abu Bakr's achievements received credit but would have achieved higher marks if they had connected the achievement to a leadership quality.

- (b) This question required candidates to choose Abu Bakr's greatest service and say why, in their opinion, it was his greatest. Many candidates chose the compilation of the Qur'an to be his greatest service whilst others chose defeating the false prophets. Answers were credited when ideas were supported with reasoning. It must be impressed upon candidates that in questions where they are asked to select one aspect (e.g. one service in this question), they should not waste time writing about more than one as it will not earn them marks. The time would be better spent developing the reasoning behind their choice.

Question 4

- (a) Few candidates attempted this question. Candidates that answered who demonstrated their knowledge of this Article of Faith were credited. Those candidates that confused predestination and decree with resurrection and life after death received no marks.
- (b) **Part (b)** had a direct link with **Part (a)**; those candidates who did not respond appropriately to **Part (a)** found it challenging, although they did occasionally receive a mark for this part answer depending on the wording of their response.

Question 5

- (a) This question on the giving of *zakat* was broad. In response, candidates needed to say what *zakat* and *nisab* was, to whom it could be paid and who could not receive *zakat*, and then give the benefits of *zakat*. Good answers addressed each of these elements. Some candidates mentioned some details about *zakat* but focussed their answer on the benefits.
- (b) Candidates had to choose whether they thought the personal or communal benefit of *zakat* was greater and explain their ideas. Stronger candidates made a clear choice and supported it with reasoning to earn marks.

ISLAMIYAT

Paper 0493/22
Paper 22

Key messages

The paper was well attempted by most candidates who gave good responses to the questions set. Well prepared candidates performed more strongly across the paper.

It is important that candidates understand the focus of a question before beginning their answer. Some candidates did not understand the requirements of **Question 2(b)** and **4(b)** and this hindered their performance.

General comments

Poor handwriting emerged as a prominent challenge during the marking process. It is recommended that the centres emphasise the instruction for responses to be written legibly. In cases where centres are aware that a candidate has severe issues around handwriting, they should seek permission to use a word processor or a scribe if appropriate.

If candidates use a continuation booklet, the questions being answered must be clearly labelled.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

- (a) All four Hadiths were equally popular with candidates. The distinction between **Part (a)** and **Part (b)** questions should be noted. Candidates should avoid giving practical examples in **Part (a)** when writing about the teachings given in the Hadith, as that content should be provided instead in **Part (b)**. Hadith 5, for example, gives ways of how the teaching could be acted upon. Paraphrasing those examples was not the best way to say what the teachings of the Hadith were; instead, what was needed was evidence of an understanding of the teaching which is that worship is not restricted to fulfilling the Pillars of Islam but includes everyday acts of kindness.

Some of the set Hadiths in the syllabus are connected to brotherhood. In many answers, it seemed as if candidates were writing about Hadith 16 instead of Hadith 2. Candidates are reminded to ensure their answers are focused and precise in order to achieve higher marks.

- (b) There were some good answers seen in response to this question. Less confident candidates paraphrased when explaining how the teachings of Hadiths 14 and 5 could be acted upon. For Hadith 14, candidates could have given examples of the Prophet's honesty as a trader. For Hadith 5, there were many everyday examples that could have been given. For example, smiling at someone, or helping a fellow student prepare for a test or exam.

Question 2

- (a) This question assessed candidates' knowledge of the two components of Hadiths, *isnad* and *matn*, and why they were important in Hadith collection. Candidates mainly gave good accounts of *isnad* and *matn* and wrote about the rules of both. Most candidates also briefly wrote about their importance in Hadith compilation which was a requirement of the answer. Some candidates did not fully answer the question and consequently received lower marks.

Very few candidates developed their answers to say how *Musnad* and *Musannaf* collections of Hadiths are based on *isnad* and *matn* of Hadiths, or that it is the *matn* that classifies a Hadith as a *Hadith Nabawi* from a *Hadith Qudsi*.

- (b) The question was not asking about the importance of authentic Hadiths but was focused instead on their importance in formulating Islamic law. Many candidates missed this point and wrote answers, often of a good standard, concentrating solely on the importance of authentic Hadiths, preventing them from achieving higher marks.

Question 3

- (a) Candidates were required to write about a significant reason for the Battle of Siffin and give a detailed account of the events of the battle. Most were able to write about a significant reason for the battle, but often the main body of answers did not detail the events of the battle itself but rather the arbitration. The account of arbitration was seen as development of the answer but to access the higher marks the events of the battle had to be covered, e.g. initial attempts at negotiations, skirmishes, events of the days of fighting in this battle, etc.

In questions such as these, details such as battle dates, the names of key commanders and battle locations are important. Some candidates confused the Battle of Camel with the Battle of Siffin.

- (b) The *kharij* opposition to 'Ali after the Battle of Siffin and the consequences of this was the focus of this question. Candidates needed to discuss the idea that it led to the Battle of Nahrawan which further disheartened 'Ali's soldiers and made them turn down Ali's call to fight Muawiya again. They were also required to write about how this stance led to a strengthening of Muawiya and a weakening of 'Ali's position. Most candidates did identify that it was a *khariji* plot that planned Ali's martyrdom which led to his death.

Question 4

- (a) This question asked candidates about Muslim belief in prophets and revealed books. Though popular with candidates, it was not always as well answered as it could have been. Some candidates focussed on revealed books and wrote little on Muslim belief in prophets; others wrote on prophets and gave a brief and undeveloped account of belief in revealed books. A balanced response was required to achieve Level 4 marks.

Candidates could have written about why prophets were sent, their number, their characteristics, their miracles, their names and the protection Allah gave them. In terms of revealed books, candidates needed to state their names and the prophets they were sent to. Details of what became of the revealed books could have been added to responses and answers could have been further developed by highlighting the universality of the Qur'an and how Allah has promised to protect it.

Some candidates did write about the nations to whom the revealed books were sent which was good development.

- (b) This question was not always clearly understood by candidates. It was not specific to any prophet and was clearly not a question asking why the Qur'an was revealed to the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) over a period.

Many candidates gave an account of the ways the Qur'an was revealed to the Prophet (pbuh) or recounted the circumstances of revelations.

Question 5

- (a) Some good answers were seen in response to this question. Candidates needed to write about how Muslims prepare for both Friday (*Jum'a*) and *Eid* prayers, as well as the special features of these prayers. Although there was some overlap in content, there were clear differences as well, especially in terms of the special features.

- (b) This question asked candidates about the importance of praying in congregation at a mosque, not only for Friday or *Eid* Prayers, but every day. Some candidates wrote good responses discussing

how praying in congregation develops brotherhood, unity and equality. Some answers identified that after congregational prayers issues facing the community are discussed and charity is given.

Conclusion

Overall, candidates performed well in this examination. Candidates are to be commended for their effort and hard work.