

ISLAMIC STUDIES

Paper 9013/11

Paper 1

General Comments.

Candidates are encouraged to pay attention to examination techniques such as reading the questions carefully and developing answers as required. Unfortunately several candidates scored low marks because they did not answer the question set. **Questions 1, 3, 7, 8 and 10** were the most popular questions and were answered satisfactorily. **Questions 4, 6 and 12** were less popular and less well answered. **Question 9** did not attract many responses.

Most candidates appeared well prepared for the examination and there were a number of excellent scripts. Many candidates demonstrated a sound knowledge of the subject.

Comments on Specific Questions

Section A

Question 1

- (a) This question was generally well answered, with many candidates demonstrating their familiarity with the worship at the Ka'ba in pre-Islamic Arabia and these were well described. Stronger candidates were able to mention the names and numbers of idols in the Ka'ba. Although many answers identified specific beliefs of hanifs, some responses focused on Imam Abu-Hanifa. Weaker candidates often lacked sound knowledge and tended towards generalised statements.
- (b) Part (b) was generally well answered with the majority of candidates explaining the main reasons about the cleansing of the Ka'ba.

Question 2

There were many good answers to this question but unfortunately several candidates misread the question. These candidates did not show enough knowledge of precise historical events and generalised on the life of the Prophet (pbuh).

Question 3

Candidates were required to give a detailed description of one of Caliph 'Ali's major battles and explain the reasons why it took place. A high proportion of candidates wrote relevant, well-balanced answers, giving approximately equal attention to both Caliph 'Ali and Mu'awiyah. Weaker responses lacked specific details.

Section B

Question 4

Stronger candidates were able to offer a comprehensive account of the different characters between the Meccan Surahs and the Medinan Surahs of the Qur'an. Weaker candidates stated the importance of the Qur'an. Some responses were either very brief or the explanation was confused.

Question 5

This question was not a popular choice and the standard of answering was low overall. Specific knowledge was required to address this question effectively. Very few candidates could explain the reasons why the order of the Surahs in the Qur'an is the reverse of the order in which the Prophet (pbuh) received them.

Question 6

Overall this question was very well answered with candidates providing detailed answers. The relatively small number of candidates who chose this question answered it well and displayed a wide range of knowledge about the importance of *tawhid* in Islam. They also outlined the main teaching about *tawhid* in the Qur'an as a whole.

Section C

Question 7

This question was very popular and many of the candidates who attempted it did well. There were some outstanding responses to this question. The majority of the candidates possessed sound knowledge about the Pillars of Islam and their importance in Muslim life. They provided a range of evaluation statements and most were able to link these statements to the question. Overall this question was very well answered with candidates providing detailed answers.

Question 8

- (a) This question was quite popular and was done well by a large number of candidates. Most candidates were able to provide a complete list of the principal rites in connection with the institution of the pilgrimage as observed by Muslims and offered a clear explanation of the link between Prophet Abraham and Hajj. Some candidates did not read the question carefully and concentrated only upon the ceremony of sacrifice.
- (b) This part of the question asked for an explanation of the significance of these connections. This was generally well answered. However, some candidates gave brief answers and there was some repetition of points from part (a).

Question 9

Very few attempted this question.

Section D

Question 10

This was the most popular question in this section and many of the candidates who attempted it did well. The majority of candidates were able to outline the principles of consensus in Islamic law. However, some candidates confused *ijma'* with *qiyas*.

Question 11

Responses to this question generally showed that the majority of candidates did not understand the question. Most candidates outlined their knowledge and understanding of Hadith as a primary source of Islamic law and wrote at length leading to unfocused answers. The better answers to this question displayed a very sound knowledge and understanding of the Qur'an and jurisprudence and thus were able to provide detailed examples to illustrate their answers.

Question 12

This question was not a popular choice, but several candidates who answered it were knowledgeable on Islamic law and gave a detailed account of *qiyas*, providing examples to illustrate their answers. Some responses lacked a full knowledge of the topic and were superficial, lacking supporting examples. Very few candidates could explain why only qualified legal experts are allowed to practice analogy.

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Paper 9013/12

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This question was not a popular choice, but several candidates who answered it were knowledgeable on Islamic law and gave a detailed account of *qiyas*, providing examples to illustrate their answers. Some responses lacked a full knowledge of the topic and were superficial, lacking supporting examples. Very few candidates could explain why only qualified legal experts are allowed to practice analogy.

ISLAMIC STUDIES

Paper 9013/21

Paper 2

General Comments

There were fewer answers that did not make a satisfactory attempt to answer the questions given, and more answers achieved an evaluative response. Candidates structured their answers well, wrote proficiently and in detail, and gave the impression of being confident in the subject matter.

Themes that were evident were that the best responses defined terms clearly. In some questions students were challenged to choose two aspects of a topic. In such cases, it is important that candidates define two and do not write in general around the topic.

The very best responses this year also showed a degree of challenge. Some students did not simply respond, but argued. They did not accept what was being given to them but questioned it, sometimes in the fine detail of the argument or by acknowledging some exceptions to the rule. In addition to this the best answers were also well paragraphed, with clear points, explanation and examples. In this way good arguments were developed.

A small number of candidates did not answer five questions, or wrote a detailed response to one then a very short response to another. Within the topics below, Hadith methodology and Qur'anic interpretation by the four Imams are two of the topics for which more details are required.

Comments on Specific Questions

Section A

Question 1

There were some excellent responses to this question, which answered the question in different ways. Some of the best gave clear introductions defining what 'greatest' meant in terms of a Caliphate. Was it in terms of military expansion, strong leadership, or the piety and religious policies of the Caliph? Some responses chose one Caliph and composed an argument paragraph by paragraph, taking a different aspect of the Caliph's rule in each paragraph. Those responses made the case in each paragraph why that aspect of rule was better than the preceding or following Caliphs. A different way of answering this question, which a few candidates took, was to write a paragraph about each Caliph and compare them all, to show who was the greatest. Both ways of answering enabled a measure of comparison and evaluation which helped candidates reach the higher levels of response. Most, but not all, candidates chose Umar II on account of his piety and religious policies as the one whom was regarded as the greatest.

Question 2

Few candidates answered this question. In addition to giving a chronology of events, for A Level some kind of analysis is expected to achieve the higher levels of response marks, and this was achievable through adding comments about reasons why the events happened in each part. That was an opportunity for candidates to show their deeper understanding of the events. Candidates need to structure their responses so that they can give well rounded accounts and balance the amount of detail they give with their overall conclusions and interpretations.

Question 3

Very few chose to answer this question. One good response defined the term Islamic then pointed out ways in which the Umayyads were Islamic and the 'Abbasids were not as Islamic in the way they are sometimes given credit for, thereby challenging the question. Another response looked at different Caliphs and rulers as

individuals when it came to Islamic piety and saw more differences between individuals than between dynasties as a whole. However, most included the cultural and scientific golden age of the 'Abbasids contrasted that with some of the years of decadence and personal luxury in the courts of some of the Umayyads and used this as the basis of a justification for their arguments.

Section B

Question 4

This was a question which was attempted by many candidates. Most chose to compare the Madhabs of al-Shafi and Abu Hanifa. Commonly students explained the use of Qur'an, Hadith – including the importance of various traditions including Hadiths from Medina, *ijma'*, *qiyas* and the place of later *ijtihad*. The best answers challenged the premise that there was much of a difference. Better answers were distinguished by the way they developed their accounts using reasoned examples of how the Imams developed their interpretations for specific issues, based on quotations from the Qur'an in the first instance.

Question 5

There were several basic and satisfactory responses but few excellent ones to this question. Candidates needed to know the basics of Hadith collection in checking both the *isnad* and the *matn*: the chain of narrators and methods for verifying their trustworthiness, as well as the subject matter of the Hadith and methods for comparing this to the Qur'an and other established Hadith and teachings. Candidates should be able to give detailed factual accounts about this as a minimum. The best answers added to this detail about the collectors such as Bukhari and biographical details about how he compiled his volumes of Hadith, so that all would accept their validity.

Question 6

Those who opted for this question generally made reasonable attempts at answering it. The best answers gave equal space to both the Mu'tazilah and the Ash'ariyya, whereas more basic answers wrote mostly about the characteristics of the Mu'tazilah. An excellent answer questioned the premise that there was such a difference, at least in the early days of the movement, and went on to distinguish the fine points in the differences which nevertheless saw the Mu'tazilah as an influential and tolerated interpretation of Islam for the best part of the ninth to tenth centuries in Basra. It was here that Abu Hashim al-Jubba'i refined some of the ideas of the Mu'tazilah. Good responses in general were well-structured answers, taking one point per paragraph – such as rationalism, the place of the Qur'an, judgement, and so on – and within each paragraph clearly explaining the opposing views.

Section C

Question 7

This was a popular question and generally well answered. The best answers gave accurate and detailed description of the events leading up to Karbala', and the aftermath. Better answers also explained the characteristics of Shi'i Islam and the beginnings of the line of Imams. The question was concentrated on early Shi'i Islam, not general Shi'i Islam throughout history or the modern day, so the last part of the question about the line of Imams was intended to be answered within that context, rather than in general about the importance of Shi'i Imams today. Where a candidate had a strong faith or sectarian background themselves, such as Sunni Islam, they generally wrote in an appropriate way without derogatory or personal condemnation of a different sect.

Question 8

This was a popular question and reasonably well answered. For part (a) candidates are reminded of the need to answer all the terms given, including *baqa'*, which was omitted by some. This is the ideal perfection, with God: the beginning and end of the journey which all realise though some consciously and others unconsciously. Some consider this attained by prophets and sages within their lives in the past; others that it can be attained by all after death in the future. For part (b) candidates were required to clearly define two characteristics of their choice, provided they are important within Sufism. Some answers wrote in general about Sufism, but the best responses began by clearly stating two terms and defining them. It should be acknowledged that there is a range of viewpoints within Islam over Sufism, ranging from devotees, to those sympathetic towards it, to those who see it as unhelpful or even heretical. Therefore, the extent to which

Sufism is distinguished might depend on the viewpoint offered, and an appreciation of the range made for an excellent answer.

Question 9

Very few students responded to this question. Some confused *falsafa* with Sufi or Shi'i devotional practices – this question was, instead, asking for an intellectual analysis of the ideas behind philosophy and at its centre the place of rational deduction as opposed to divine revelation. Some wrote in detail about a particular work they had studied, which was relevant in so far as they made it relevant by addressing it specifically to the question here by drawing out from it key philosophical points. Candidates should beware of over-simplifying the issues. The best answers noted that Islamic philosophers attempted, with varying degrees of success, to grapple with the concept of divine revelation within a framework of accepting human reasoning. It was not as simple as polytheistic ancient Greek philosophy versus monotheistic Qur'anic teaching. Best responses saw this and explained that the debate about *falsafa* within the Islamic world was not constant and moved on over time.

Section D

Question 10

Very few candidates answered this question but those who did made reasonable responses. It should be noted that A Level candidates may be asked about the topics specified on the syllabus in many different ways. Here, they are asked to 'write briefly' on the three modern Islamic leaders. That requires students to balance their time between the three and not to give too much detail on one leader at the expense of the others. An open ended question such as this invites candidates to include comparisons and evaluations by its very nature. The re-writing of class notes is unlikely to yield higher levels of response marks. A good answer to this question included three distinct paragraphs for each leader: the first summarising their biography; the second explaining their significance in the development of modern Islamic movements; the third comparing their contribution to the other two. This was an excellent way of organising an essay and responding to the challenge of the question.

Question 11

This was a popular question which was generally answered well. The best answers defined what was meant by important. Most candidates discussed the basis of faith, including the daily prayers, being based on the timeless Arabic recitation of the Qur'an which they concluded was as relevant today as it was in centuries gone by. Many candidates discussed the principles behind Shariah, based first and foremost on the Qur'an, and when new circumstances arose, new interpretations still went back in the first instance to any guidance available in the Qur'an. A few answers suggested that the extent to which the Qur'an is directly relevant now is less, because few modern day situations have analogy with previous times. A different way of approaching this question taken in a small number of excellent responses was to look at religion from the point of view of society. It was argued that the Qur'an was less important nowadays because society was more focused on the materialistic than the spiritual; modern daily life is much less focused around the recitation of the Qur'an than that of previous generations. As ever, the best levels were awarded not on the basis of which line was taken, but on how well the case was argued.

Question 12

This was a popular question but there were very few developed responses. Most candidates wrote in detail about the rights of women in Islam, which was given some credit, but this was not sufficient to answer the question set out here. What was required was reference to, and an explanation of why, some people see parts of the Qur'an as treating men and women differently, and thereby see Islam as not for women 'as much as' men. That did not mean candidates had to agree with the quotation – they had to explain it. It is here that the skills of objective analysis, expected at A Level, should be applied by candidates. The best responses typically stated that in their viewpoint, men and women were equal, but that certain references from the Qur'an seemed to suggest otherwise. They quoted Islamic references to prayer, where women are not compelled to attend Jummah prayers in mosques, and exemptions at times of menstruation. Good answers also quoted Shariah law where male witnesses receive more credence than female. Some answers claimed that women's role in Islam was more important than that of the man, because 'paradise lies at the feet of the mother' and her role in child rearing and the teaching of Islam to her children is essential. Excellent responses noted that many aspects of society where women are treated unequally are not necessarily Qur'anic, and the sayings of Muhammad (pbuh) challenged social attitudes of the time in regards to women.

ISLAMIC STUDIES

Paper 9013/22

Paper 2

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There were fewer answers that did not make a satisfactory attempt to answer the questions given, and more answers achieved an evaluative response. Candidates structured their answers well, wrote proficiently and in detail, and gave the impression of being confident in the subject matter.

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This was a popular question but there were very few developed responses. Most candidates wrote in detail about the rights of women in Islam, which was given some credit, but this was not sufficient to answer the question set out here. What was required was reference to, and an explanation of why, some people see parts of the Qur'an as treating men and women differently, and thereby see Islam as not for women 'as much as' men. That did not mean candidates had to agree with the quotation – they had to explain it. It is here that the skills of objective analysis, expected at A Level, should be applied by candidates. The best responses typically stated that in their viewpoint, men and women were equal, but that certain references from the Qur'an seemed to suggest otherwise. They quoted Islamic references to prayer, where women are not compelled to attend Jummah prayers in mosques, and exemptions at times of menstruation. Good answers also quoted Shariah law where male witnesses receive more credence than female. Some answers claimed that women's role in Islam was more important than that of the man, because 'paradise lies at the feet of the mother' and her role in child rearing and the teaching of Islam to her children is essential. Excellent responses noted that many aspects of society where women are treated unequally are not necessarily Qur'anic, and the sayings of Muhammad (pbuh) challenged social attitudes of the time in regards to women.

ISLAMIC STUDIES

Paper 9013/23

Paper 2

General Comments

There were fewer answers that did not make a satisfactory attempt to answer the questions given, and more answers achieved an evaluative response. Candidates structured their answers well, wrote proficiently and in detail, and gave the impression of being confident in the subject matter.

Themes that were evident were that the best responses defined terms clearly. In some questions students were challenged to choose two aspects of a topic. In such cases, it is important that candidates define two and do not write in general around the topic.

The very best responses this year also showed a degree of challenge. Some students did not simply respond, but argued. They did not accept what was being given to them but questioned it, sometimes in the fine detail of the argument or by acknowledging some exceptions to the rule. In addition to this the best answers were also well paragraphed, with clear points, explanation and examples. In this way good arguments were developed.

A small number of candidates did not answer five questions, or wrote a detailed response to one then a very short response to another. Within the topics below, Hadith methodology and Qur'anic interpretation by the four Imams are two of the topics for which more details are required.

Comments on Specific Questions

Section A

Question 1

There were some excellent responses to this question, which answered the question in different ways. Some of the best gave clear introductions defining what 'greatest' meant in terms of a Caliphate. Was it in terms of military expansion, strong leadership, or the piety and religious policies of the Caliph? Some responses chose one Caliph and composed an argument paragraph by paragraph, taking a different aspect of the Caliph's rule in each paragraph. Those responses made the case in each paragraph why that aspect of rule was better than the preceding or following Caliphs. A different way of answering this question, which a few candidates took, was to write a paragraph about each Caliph and compare them all, to show who was the greatest. Both ways of answering enabled a measure of comparison and evaluation which helped candidates reach the higher levels of response. Most, but not all, candidates chose Umar II on account of his piety and religious policies as the one whom was regarded as the greatest.

Question 2

Few candidates answered this question. In addition to giving a chronology of events, for A Level some kind of analysis is expected to achieve the higher levels of response marks, and this was achievable through adding comments about reasons why the events happened in each part. That was an opportunity for candidates to show their deeper understanding of the events. Candidates need to structure their responses so that they can give well rounded accounts and balance the amount of detail they give with their overall conclusions and interpretations.

Question 3

Very few chose to answer this question. One good response defined the term Islamic then pointed out ways in which the Umayyads were Islamic and the 'Abbasids were not as Islamic in the way they are sometimes given credit for, thereby challenging the question. Another response looked at different Caliphs and rulers as

individuals when it came to Islamic piety and saw more differences between individuals than between dynasties as a whole. However, most included the cultural and scientific golden age of the 'Abbasids contrasted that with some of the years of decadence and personal luxury in the courts of some of the Umayyads and used this as the basis of a justification for their arguments.

Section B

Question 4

This was a question which was attempted by many candidates. Most chose to compare the Madhabs of al-Shafi and Abu Hanifa. Commonly students explained the use of Qur'an, Hadith – including the importance of various traditions including Hadiths from Medina, *ijma'*, *qiyas* and the place of later *ijtihad*. The best answers challenged the premise that there was much of a difference. Better answers were distinguished by the way they developed their accounts using reasoned examples of how the Imams developed their interpretations for specific issues, based on quotations from the Qur'an in the first instance.

Question 5

There were several basic and satisfactory responses but few excellent ones to this question. Candidates needed to know the basics of Hadith collection in checking both the *isnad* and the *matn*: the chain of narrators and methods for verifying their trustworthiness, as well as the subject matter of the Hadith and methods for comparing this to the Qur'an and other established Hadith and teachings. Candidates should be able to give detailed factual accounts about this as a minimum. The best answers added to this detail about the collectors such as Bukhari and biographical details about how he compiled his volumes of Hadith, so that all would accept their validity.

Question 6

Those who opted for this question generally made reasonable attempts at answering it. The best answers gave equal space to both the Mu'tazilah and the Ash'ariyya, whereas more basic answers wrote mostly about the characteristics of the Mu'tazilah. An excellent answer questioned the premise that there was such a difference, at least in the early days of the movement, and went on to distinguish the fine points in the differences which nevertheless saw the Mu'tazilah as an influential and tolerated interpretation of Islam for the best part of the ninth to tenth centuries in Basra. It was here that Abu Hashim al-Jubba'i refined some of the ideas of the Mu'tazilah. Good responses in general were well-structured answers, taking one point per paragraph – such as rationalism, the place of the Qur'an, judgement, and so on – and within each paragraph clearly explaining the opposing views.

Section C

Question 7

This was a popular question and generally well answered. The best answers gave accurate and detailed description of the events leading up to Karbala', and the aftermath. Better answers also explained the characteristics of Shi'i Islam and the beginnings of the line of Imams. The question was concentrated on early Shi'i Islam, not general Shi'i Islam throughout history or the modern day, so the last part of the question about the line of Imams was intended to be answered within that context, rather than in general about the importance of Shi'i Imams today. Where a candidate had a strong faith or sectarian background themselves, such as Sunni Islam, they generally wrote in an appropriate way without derogatory or personal condemnation of a different sect.

Question 8

This was a popular question and reasonably well answered. For part (a) candidates are reminded of the need to answer all the terms given, including *baqa'*, which was omitted by some. This is the ideal perfection, with God: the beginning and end of the journey which all realise though some consciously and others unconsciously. Some consider this attained by prophets and sages within their lives in the past; others that it can be attained by all after death in the future. For part (b) candidates were required to clearly define two characteristics of their choice, provided they are important within Sufism. Some answers wrote in general about Sufism, but the best responses began by clearly stating two terms and defining them. It should be acknowledged that there is a range of viewpoints within Islam over Sufism, ranging from devotees, to those sympathetic towards it, to those who see it as unhelpful or even heretical. Therefore, the extent to which

Sufism is distinguished might depend on the viewpoint offered, and an appreciation of the range made for an excellent answer.

Question 9

Very few students responded to this question. Some confused *falsafa* with Sufi or Shi'i devotional practices – this question was, instead, asking for an intellectual analysis of the ideas behind philosophy and at its centre the place of rational deduction as opposed to divine revelation. Some wrote in detail about a particular work they had studied, which was relevant in so far as they made it relevant by addressing it specifically to the question here by drawing out from it key philosophical points. Candidates should beware of over-simplifying the issues. The best answers noted that Islamic philosophers attempted, with varying degrees of success, to grapple with the concept of divine revelation within a framework of accepting human reasoning. It was not as simple as polytheistic ancient Greek philosophy versus monotheistic Qur'anic teaching. Best responses saw this and explained that the debate about *falsafa* within the Islamic world was not constant and moved on over time.

Section D

Question 10

Very few candidates answered this question but those who did made reasonable responses. It should be noted that A Level candidates may be asked about the topics specified on the syllabus in many different ways. Here, they are asked to 'write briefly' on the three modern Islamic leaders. That requires students to balance their time between the three and not to give too much detail on one leader at the expense of the others. An open ended question such as this invites candidates to include comparisons and evaluations by its very nature. The re-writing of class notes is unlikely to yield higher levels of response marks. A good answer to this question included three distinct paragraphs for each leader: the first summarising their biography; the second explaining their significance in the development of modern Islamic movements; the third comparing their contribution to the other two. This was an excellent way of organising an essay and responding to the challenge of the question.

Question 11

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