

ISLAMIC RELIGION AND CULTURE

Paper 2056/01

Paper 1

General comments

Performance this year covered a wide ability range, both between Centres and within Centres. There were some very good performances from individual candidates whose knowledge and understanding on both parts (a) and (b) was outstanding. It was obvious that these candidates had read the question a number of times and answered appropriately.

Teachers are advised to encourage candidates to rely on their ability as well as their memory. Answers learnt by heart and produced verbatim are never ideal. They should also be made aware that i. and ii. in part (a) are to be answered separately. Answers pertaining to i. and written in ii. will not be credited. It should be made clear that answers should be written in prose, not given in bullet points, statements need to be explained. Care must be taken when extra pages are tied to an answer booklet.

The most popular questions were 1, 4, 6, 9, 10 and 11.

Comments on specific questions

Section A

Question 1

This was the most popular question and answers varied.

- (a) There were many good answers. Candidates mentioned the Ka'aba being the centre of worship long before Islam. They gave relevant details of beliefs and practices during the time of the *jahiliyya*. It was important not to mix religious beliefs with prevailing social practices.
- (b) The key to answering this part of the question was to focus on what the Prophet 'adapted and included'. Able candidates mentioned reinstating the Ka'aba as the House of Allah, the circumambulation of it, wearing *ihraam* and correcting the idea of sacrificing an animal in the name of Allah. They also wrote about how the Prophet made links with the beliefs of Jews and Christians saying Islam was a continuation of the same message from Allah.

Question 2

Part (a) of this question was well answered on the whole. Part i. and ii. carried equal marks.

- (a) (i) Most candidates knew the importance of Halimah. Some candidates limited their response to her being his foster mother. Better responses mentioned that he learnt pure Arabic living with Halimah and her tribe. This early experience of simple living in the desert, away from the hustle and bustle of Mecca, made him appreciate the signs of nature which added to his faith in his later years.
- (ii) The importance of Khadijah in the life of the Prophet was well known. Most answers here gave more than adequate details of their life together.
- (b) Candidates were familiar with the titles of *as-Sadiq* and *al-Amin* given to the Prophet before the coming of Islam. Good answers mentioned how the pact of Hiflul Fudul influenced his character from an early age making him aware of the plight of others; episodes from his early life such as his honest reputation as a trader; keeping valuables safe for others and the story of the repairing of the Ka'aba which resulted in a peaceful resolution to the problem.

Question 3

This was a popular question. Candidates performed better in part (a). Part (b) asked for lessons Muslims learn from the Prophet's behaviour and attitude during those times of difficulty.

- (a) Persecutions faced by the Prophet and his followers were usually presented in enough detail. Some candidates concentrated only on the Prophet and omitted mentioning the suffering of other Muslims. Some even mentioned the episode in Taif which was not required as the question specified Mecca.
- (b) Good answers here spoke about the lessons learnt from the Prophet's unshakeable faith, his patience and calm regardless of provocation, his forgiving nature, his awareness of the suffering of the early converts and being a role model for all times.

Question 4

This was another popular question and many candidates did well. Part (a) had two parts and these needed to be separate answers.

- (a) (i) Good answers here mentioned the jealousy of the Quraish towards the growing importance of the Prophet in Medina and wanting to attack Medina because of this. The Muslims were therefore living under constant threat of invasion. Despite this they were eager to attack Quraish trading caravans to make up for what they had left behind in Mecca.
- (ii) Most candidates were able to describe what occurred during the battle. Here it was important not to confuse what happened at Badr with events of Uhud.
- (b) The challenge of evaluating why this battle was a turning point for Muslims presented little difficulty for able candidates. Points were made about Badr being the first decisive victory which gave confidence to the Muslims in their own power and consolidated the position of the Prophet as a leader. Muslims believed that Allah had helped them. Meccan prisoners were treated with magnanimity, unprecedented during those times.

Question 5

This question was answered by a few candidates. On the whole more needs to be known about the achievements of the Prophet in Medina

- (a) Good answers were from candidates who wrote about what brotherhood (*al muwakhat*) entailed, why it was initiated by the Prophet and what it meant to the fledgling Muslim community. They wrote about the economic assistance given by the *ansar* to the destitute *muhajirun* helping their 'brothers' to set up their businesses, thus expressing their unique kindness and sympathy in every way. In return the *muhajirun* taught the *ansar* all they had learnt about Islam from the Prophet during their years in Mecca.
- (b) Candidates answered this part in very general terms. Some said no more than the fact that Muslims could worship freely. Good answers spoke of the Prophet making Medina a classless society where everyone was equal. Revelations received by the Prophet in Medina gave structure and meaning to Muslim life. These included the direction of the *qiblah*, rules of fasting and *zakat* and rights and duties of men and women to name a few.

Question 6

This question was chosen by the majority of candidates.

- (a) The narrative of the day Umar accepted Islam was well answered. Mention was made of the *Sura* he read, the impact the words had on him and his subsequent visit to the Prophet to proclaim the *shahadah*.
- (b) There were some detailed answers about Umar's achievements during his ten years as Caliph. Candidates wrote of Umar's management of conquered territories, victorious battles, aspects of his administration, establishment of the *hijri* calendar, the importance of the *majlis-e-shura* and the introduction of new taxes.

Question 7

For many, it appeared that the question was not read correctly, though part (b) was answered better than (a).

- (a) The question here asked 'what you know' about the contents of the Qur'an. Good answers said the Qur'an talks about Allah, His attributes, stories of prophets, the Day of Judgment, warnings about being led astray, prohibitions, relationships and much more. Many candidates reiterated the mark scheme for a question set in 2010 and this was not relevant.
- (b) Candidates were asked to explain the significance of the Qur'an for Muslims. There were many good answers here where candidates wrote that the Qur'an was the foundation of Islam, the words of Allah and a code of life for Muslims. Some candidates over emphasised the importance of reciting the Qur'an rather than its significance as the basis of Islam and a book to understand and reflect on.

Question 8

This was another question with part (a) having i. and ii. This meant that two separate aspects of this Sura had to be answered.

- (a) (i) Some candidates wrote that this Sura answered a question the pagan Meccans had asked about the ancestry of Allah. The revelation of this Sura rejected their polytheism. Good answers mentioned it being an early Meccan Sura which the Prophet had said, was equivalent to a third of the Qur'an as it contains the most fundamental belief of Islam, *tawhid*.
- (ii) The teachings of this short Sura were generally well explained stating the essence of Allah as One, unique, without beginning and without end.
- (b) There was a great variety of answers in this part. It was often seen to be a question about belief in Allah rather than how that belief affects the life of a Muslim. There were a number of good answers saying a Muslim has complete trust and hope in Allah for His guidance and His forgiveness. Others stated that Allah is there for all humankind not just for Muslims, so there is a need to respect the beliefs and practices of other faiths.

Question 9

This question was attempted by quite a few candidates. Both parts were generally answered well.

- (a) Some candidates went far beyond what was asked and wrote three pages covering the whole life of Musa rather than just the events after he was born. Candidates need to pay sufficient attention to the wording of the question. Many good answers began with Pharaoh killing male babies of the Jews and Allah reassuring the mother of Musa not to be fearful and telling her what she should do. Further details of the story were recounted till the time he was adopted by Pharaoh's wife and subsequently brought up in the palace.
- (b) Candidates did well in this part in suggesting why it is important for Muslims to believe in prophets. Good answers stated that this belief is an Article of Faith for Muslims, that all prophets were human and sent to preach the same message of the Oneness of Allah, and that Allah makes no distinction between His prophets and nor should Muslims.

Question 10

This was another popular question.

- (a) Candidates needed to describe the steps taken before prayer and not include the timing of prayers, *rakats* and invocations. Good answers mentioned *wudu*, wearing clean clothes, having a clean place to pray, waiting for the *adhan*, facing the *qiblah* and making *niyyat*. Candidates need to know the distinction between *ghusl* and *wudu*.
- (b) Candidates need to look at prayer in a wider context, not just as actions that need to be done at specified times. Good answers mentioned prayer bringing structure to the day, comfort to the soul and strengthening the relationship with Allah.

Question 11

Many candidates chose to answer this question. Part **(a)** was answered better than **(b)**.

- (a)** Answers here were generally good with very full details about the rites undertaken when a baby is born including praying for the baby, giving money to the poor and sharing the sacrificial meat with them.
- (b)** Good answers mentioned mosques being an integral and valuable part of Muslim religious practice and life in general. Mention was made of classes conducted to teach the Qur'an, available for all ages, community welfare projects undertaken there and congregational prayers held for the two occasions of Eid and every Friday.

Question 12

This question was not attempted by many candidates. Part **(b)** was better answered than **(a)**.

- (a)** The question asked what the Prophet said and what he meant in two of the Hadiths studied. Good answers wrote about the wording of the Hadith and were able to explain clearly what they thought the Prophet meant. In the first part good answers suggested that the Prophet meant that anger should be kept under control. The main teaching in the second part was that bad actions witnessed by a Muslim should not be ignored.
- (b)** There is a general understanding of why Muslims should follow the Hadith and *sunnah* of the Prophet. Able candidates mentioned Hadith and *sunnah* as the second source of law for Muslims as well as providing guidance on all aspects of life.