

ISLAMIYAT

Paper 2058/01

Paper 1

General comments

The general comments here apply to both Papers 1 and 2.

There were some excellent scripts among the many marked this summer, including a few with answers that were so good they were given full marks. They did credit to both candidates and teachers. These answers bore the features for which Examiners always look, including concise comments that focus on the point of the question, full descriptive or narrative accounts, thoughtful evaluative remarks that indicate reflection on the topic of the question, and relevant quotations from the Qur'an or Hadiths where appropriate. Candidates would do well to aim for answers of this kind, because they are the ones that are likely to earn most marks.

The general standard from many Centres was high, and there appeared to be fewer rote-learned answers than in previous examinations. But, as always, there were some recurring mistakes and tendencies that call for comment in order to help achieve further improvements.

The most frequent tendency was for candidates to write without thinking. This has been the subject of comments in many previous reports, and the evidence of the scripts in this examination suggests that many teachers have taken note. The consequence is that in many Centres candidates are being prepared to read the questions with care, to try to see what the questions are actually asking, and to give answers that relate to the actual words of the question.

The importance of paying heed to the way a question is phrased cannot be emphasised too much. This year, three questions in particular attracted answers that were less good than they could have been for the very reason that the way in which they were phrased was frequently overlooked. The first of these was 2058/01 **Question 2(a)**, which was worded, 'Describe the main events of the Prophet's migration from Makka to Madina'. This asked for a straightforward, though detailed and accurate, account of what took place during the Prophet and Abu Bakr's journey in 622. But some candidates, possibly having been led to expect a repetition of a similarly worded question from a few years ago, wrote about the events that led up to the migration, and a few began with the Prophet's first experience of revelation many years before. The second was 2058/02 **Question 3(a)**, which asked about the teachings in the Qur'an on three issues in Islam. It is surprising how many candidates ignored this wording and the clear reference to the Qur'an, and began their answers with words such as 'Islam teaches that...' and went on to talk in general terms, often without reference to the Qur'an itself. The third was 2058/02 **Question 5(a)**, which asked about events in the lifetime of the Prophet in which three important early Muslims were involved. A sizeable minority of candidates wrote general biographies of these figures (including Khadija's previous marriages), and made a great deal about their characters, leaving aside mentions of actual events that took place. The wording of these questions was straightforward and not intended to trick candidates. So the failure to answer what it actually did and did not ask, which could only result in loss of marks, must arise from lack of proper attention when reading it.

Another tendency was for candidates to go off the point of a question. This was particularly the case in answers to 2058/01 **Question 1** and 2058/02 **Question 2**. The instructions in these questions are quite specific, but many candidates tended to write all they knew about the set passages from the Qur'an in 2058/01 **Question 1**, while answers to the Hadiths in 2058/02 **Question 2** frequently included all manner of generalisations that went far off the point of the teachings they contain about belief and action, which is what the question was asking. Precision and accuracy in answering are the ways to gain marks, and one of the ways to achieve this is to pause before writing and think hard about what the question itself is asking rather than what the candidate has learned about the topic on which the question is based. The two are not the same, and the best answers are those that select, from all that the candidate knows, particular points that are relevant to what the question itself is actually asking.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

This question concerned the main teachings in two of three set passages from the Qur'an. Good answers demonstrated how a candidate had thought about the main Qur'anic theme that is exemplified in the passage and had written on this.

The Mark Scheme gave marks for basic factual points in the passages (to give encouragement to candidates of all abilities), and also marks for more advanced points that indicated a candidate knew something about the main theme contained in the passage (to enable the best candidates to distinguish themselves). In order to do well in this question, candidates had to think about the significance of the teachings in the passage and not merely write about its contents.

While there were a few good answers that identified the main teachings and their importance and gained 6 marks or more, many tended to be summaries or commentaries of the passages that only gained about 4 marks. Common mistakes and omissions included in **(a)** not identifying this passage as a description of the end of the world, and merely paraphrasing its account of the collapse of the natural order; in **(b)** not identifying the individual who is addressed in the passage; in **(c)** not seeing God as a refuge from everything the world might threaten.

Question 2

This asked for an account of the Prophet's *hijra*, and the reasons why the *hijra* was important for him.

In **part (a)** candidates were asked for accurate accounts of the Prophet's journey north to Madina. A few marks were allowed for background circumstances, but most were given for details of the journey itself, including the parts played by Abu Bakr and 'Ali, the miracle of the spider and birds at the cave of Thawr, the pursuers from Makka, the halt at Quba, and the arrival at Madina.

A number of candidates gave full and detailed accounts, but some understood the question to be about the events leading up to the *hijra*, or the events that took place after it.

Part (b) was more demanding, asking candidates to reflect on the reasons why this journey was important for the Prophet. Good answers included points such as: the danger to his life in Makka, his assurance of acceptance in Madina, his wish to put the teachings of Islam into effect, the divine instruction to depart. Some candidates wrote descriptively about the Prophet's failure at al-Ta'if, or gave long accounts of the pledges of the Madinan pilgrims. However, these were not answers to the question itself because they did not address the issue of the importance of the journey.

Question 3

This was popular with some Centres, but there was frequent confusion over the order of key elements in the annual pilgrimage. **Part (a)** asked for descriptive answers about the main observances of the annual pilgrimage, and **part (b)** asked about the importance of Ibrahim and his family in this event.

Good answers to **part (a)** gave straightforward accounts of what happens during the days of the pilgrimage from the putting on of the *ihram* at the start to the final departure from Makka. The best answers also included the dates on which the main observances are made. A number of candidates went into long and unnecessary details about the form of *ihram* for men and women, while others confused what happens at Mina and Muzdalifa, or failed to mention the important *wuquf* at 'Arafat.

Good answers to the less straightforward **part (b)** connected Ibrahim and Isma'il with the building of the ka'ba, explained the connection between Hajar and the *sayi* and between Isma'il and Zamzam, and the connection between Ibrahim's sacrifice and the *rami*. Many candidates commented on these points and did well in this part, though a few appeared to know little about Ibrahim.

Question 4

This was more popular than expected, and it produced some good answers, though also some rather poor ones.

Part (a) asked for a brief description of the four sources of legal thinking in Islam. Most candidates were able to identify them and say something relevant about them, though a surprising number did not mention consensus and analogy. It was good to see quotations of relevant Hadiths in some answers.

Part (b) asked for examples of the use of consensus and analogy. While some candidates were able to give very well-worked answers and gained the full 4 marks available, this defeated others. Some candidates did not really know the difference between the two, while others had obviously learned about analogies such as that between wine and drugs, or flour on the fingernails and nail varnish, but they did not show understanding of the reasoning that underlies the connection between them.

ISLAMIYAT

Paper 2058/02

Paper 2

General comments

See general comments for Paper 1.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

This question asked candidates to identify the meaning and importance of seven underlined words or phrases from the Qur'an passages set for special study. Their meaning is determined by who or what might be referred to, or who might be speaking in the passage and who is spoken to, and the importance is determined by the wider teaching they contain. For example, the meaning of the first phrase underlined in the paper, 'Your Lord has not forsaken you', is that this was addressed by God to the Prophet at a time when he was not receiving revelations, and its significance is that it was intended to reassure him, and Muslims in general, that God is near even when he may not appear to be.

While there were some excellent answers from candidates who had evidently been taught what the question asks and how to approach it, these answers were rather fewer than the many that contained generalities. The most glaring mistakes appeared in attempts at passages 8, 9 and 10, which come from Sura 112 and all refer to the being of God in some way. Passage 8 asks for comments on 'the one', and passage 9 on 'the absolute'. These two important terms are related but quite distinct in their significance, and some knowledge of the original Arabic is key to understanding them (this is one reason why the Arabic text is included in the question paper). Few candidates really brought out their clear meaning. This was even more obvious with passage 10, 'nor is he begotten', which is quite specifically about the fact that God is not descended from another being or generated from anyone. Some candidates understood it to mean that God has no children, the exact opposite of what it says, while others thought it meant that God has never been forgotten, showing they had not been introduced to the term 'begotten'.

Question 2

Like **Question 1**, this question on the Hadiths asks for a precise answer about the teachings of each Hadith concerning Muslim belief and action. Candidates who can identify and write about these two aspects can gain very high marks. But many answers showed few signs of having thought about the Prophet's sayings and what they mean. As has been said in the General Comments on the examination, many answers contained general moral comments that bore little resemblance to the specific Hadiths in the question.

Question 3

This asked in **(a)** for descriptions of the teachings contained in the Qur'an about **(i)** interest (*riba*) in financial dealings, **(ii)** relations between Muslims and non-Muslims, and **(iii)** women as wives, and in **(b)** for ways in which the relations between the Prophet and his wives teach Muslims today.

It clear that answers to **(a)** were to be based on the teachings of the Qur'an, and so references to verses and quotations from it would have helped to gain marks. There were some good answers to **(ii)** and **(iii)**, though many candidates did not appear to have learned much about the basics of interest in **(i)** and why it is regarded as wrong. Only a few were able to quote relevant verses on it.

Answers to **part (b)** tended to be more confident, and some candidates gave excellent examples of incidents from the Prophet's life, including his playing games with the young 'A'isha and running races with her.

Such examples showed that these candidates were doing exactly what the question requires. It is intended to make candidates think in the examination itself about the facts they have learned, and to use these

creatively. Candidates who took a few minutes to read the question and absorb what it asked were in a good position to give a thoughtful answer, and usually gained high marks.

Question 4

This was about the two caliphs Abu Bakr and 'Uthman. **Part (a)** asked about **(i)** Abu Bakr's conquest of the false prophets and **(ii)** 'Uthman's collection of the Qur'an, and **part (b)** about the reasons why the two caliphs thought it important to take these actions.

Good answers to **part (a) (i)** named the four false prophets who rose up in Abu Bakr's time, said something about each of them, and briefly described the caliph's response to them, and in **part (a) (ii)** gave details about the way in which the third caliph brought in Zayd ibn Thabit and other senior Muslims who consulted the *mushaf* of Hafsa, and then arranged for fresh copies to be circulated. Many candidates were able to give all these details, though some did not give the false prophets' names, and confused the actions taken by 'Uthman with Abu Bakr's earlier actions to arrange for the first compilation of the Qur'an.

Most candidates made accurate comments to **part (b)**, explaining the importance to Abu Bakr of getting rid of claimants who might threaten the finality of Muhammad, and to 'Uthman of destroying versions of the Qur'an that might mislead and divide Muslims. Some gained full marks for their answers to what was a challenging question. More or less all candidates showed some understanding of the reasons behind the two caliphs' actions.

Question 5

In **part (a)** this asked about the main events of the Prophet's life in which the three figures of Khadija, Abu Talib and Abu Sufyan were involved, and in **part (b)** it asked for an explanation of why Abu Talib's death was significant.

There were some full answers to **(a)**, and most candidates were able to give some events in which the figures featured. But, as was said above, many candidates took this as an opportunity to write all they knew about the three, and so included irrelevant details such as Khadija's constant support for Muhammad and Abu Talib's constant protection of him, neither of which was an actual event. The best answers referred to such details as Khadija taking her husband to her cousin Waraqa after his first experience of revelation, Abu Talib taking him on merchant journeys, and Abu Sufyan fighting against him at Badr and Uhud.

There were also some excellent answers to **(b)**, in which candidates referred to the clan system of Mecca, and to the Prophet being able to claim protection under this system as long as Abu Talib was head of his clan; this protection was withdrawn when he died and was replaced by a hostile uncle. Others wrote about the Prophet's sadness at his uncle's death, which may have been a comment on the event but was not an explanation of its significance.