

ISLAMIC STUDIES

Paper 9488/12
Written Paper 12

Key messages

Overall, a full range of responses was seen, from the very strong to the very weak.

Candidates performed equally well on all questions.

Candidates should read the question well and try to understand what is being asked before putting pen to paper. Equal marks are given for each question and candidates should address the questions where they know they can score more, not because it seems easy, but because they have understood the question and know they will engage better with the question.

General comments

- Candidates normally do better in **Question 1**, a compulsory question, as knowledge rather than evaluation is assessed.
- For **Question 2** and **3**, where there is a choice, **Question 2** proved to be more popular than **Question 3** and both the knowledge and the evaluation parts were done well.
- Candidates should ensure they engage with the questions on the examination paper, and not write about the topic in a general manner.
- Candidates are writing quite lengthy answers for **Question 1(a)** which is five marks. Examples from the life of the Prophet (pbuh) are not required here, only teachings from the verses. The number of marks available are a guide for the length of answers required.
- A brief reference to the teaching of the Hadith is required for **Question 1(b)**, the main core of the answer, however, should be on how the Prophet (pbuh) implemented these teachings in his life.
- Candidates should use clear paragraph structures to effectively build up arguments, especially for responses to AO2 questions.
- To attain the higher levels candidates should be encouraged to learn relevant quotes from the Qur'an and Hadith regarding the topics in the syllabus, e.g. Ramadan and use them to support their answers.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

(a) Describe the main teachings from Qur'an 17.35.

This question was very well answered. Most candidates gained full marks by referring to the teachings of honesty as a trader, not cheating on the balance/scale or in measuring commodities and not taking advantage of the customers' trust. Some candidates also wrote about the necessity for leaders/policymakers to make laws/policy to protect the rights of customers. The command word here is 'to describe', which means to state the main features, there was no need to go into too much detail.

(b) Explain how the Prophet (pbuh) kept the promises he made to others. You must refer to Hadith 199 and any other Hadith or verse from the Qur'an that you have studied.

This question was generally well answered, and most of the candidates referred to Hadith 199 about the signs of a hypocrite that a Muslim must try to avoid, namely lying, breaking promises and not fulfilling one's trust.

Strong answers identified incidents in the life of the Prophet where he kept his promises, or fulfilled his trusts, for example after the signing of the treaty of Hudaibiya. Many candidates mentioned that the Prophet (pbuh) was given the title of Al-Amin and As-Sadiq and how the Quraish would leave their precious belongings with him when going away, knowing that they will find them untouched when they were back. The effort the Prophet (pbuh) took to return their property when he was leaving for Hijrah by leaving ‘Ali behind was also found in strong responses. Some responses also included the honesty of the Prophet (pbuh) as a trader which won him the heart of his first wife, Khadija. References to the hypocrites living in Medina during the Prophet’s time was seen in some responses.

The Hadith of the Prophet describing how the Prophet (pbuh) stayed at a place for 3 days because he promised to wait for someone was mentioned in some responses. Strong responses contained most of the above points.

(c) ‘In modern times, it is hard for Muslims to keep to the principles of Islam when interacting with others.’ Discuss this statement with reference to different points of view.

Strong responses argued for and against the statement, giving alternative views. Most responses agreed with the statement and went on to explain the reasons why it is hard, showing no evaluation and no reference to different points of views.

The term ‘interacting with others’ was not taken into consideration in weaker responses, with only explanations on why Muslims are not practising Islamic principles today. Others understood it only in terms of a relationship between men and women and therefore focused on issues such as free mixing with women in schools/workplace and shaking hands with them.

This question was answered from different angles, which were all relevant. Some responses explained that while some people may find it hard, for example Muslims living in the west, those living in Muslim countries did not find it that challenging as they do not have any restrictions to practice their religion. Others chose to focus on all the ills of modern life and went on to say that if Muslims hold tight to the texts (Qur’an and Hadith) then, despite the many temptations around them, they would still abide by Islamic principles.

Strong responses were able to show that it is not hard to interact with others and keep to the principles of Islam, whatever the time period, and went on to show how it was done during the time of the Prophet and move on to how it is replicated today. They also explained the different types of interactions Muslims have with others, such as with neighbours, guests, colleagues at work, classmates, orphans and the poor.

Some responses cleverly made use of information from **part (a)** and **(b)**, about being fair and honest when dealing with others in conducting business.

Question 2

(a) Explain the importance of Ramadan for Muslims.

This question was extremely popular and very well answered. It is a knowledge-based question, and most responses included the different aspects that make Ramadan important for Muslims.

Strong responses explained how Ramadan is the month of fasting, the 3rd Pillar of Islam. Candidates wrote about earning God’s forgiveness, there is less temptation to sin as Satan (*Shaytan*) is tied up, the revelation of the Qur’an, there are more blessings in this month and developing love and sympathy for the poor as examples of the importance of Ramadan. Weaker responses wrote about fasting/Ramadan in general and were not focused on the question.

(b) ‘Fasting in Ramadan is equally as important as a physical act as it is a spiritual act.’ Evaluate this statement.

This question was well answered by most candidates and the evaluation was well done. The word ‘equally’ in the question prompted evaluative answers from candidates. Candidates could argue that both the spiritual and physical aspects of fasting are important or that one is more important.

Stronger responses showed some alternative points of view showing that the spiritual aspect is more important and relevant quotes from the Qur'an and Hadith were used to support these answers. The spiritual acts such as God-consciousness (*taqwa*), belief (*imaan*), and trust in God (*tawakkul*) were all explained well.

Some responses included the reciting of the Qur'an, additional prayers, almsgiving (*zakat*) and helping the poor as physical acts, and where they were linked to Ramadan they scored well. Physical purity required to pray, as well the health benefits of fasting, were also written about in many responses.

Weaker responses were quite descriptive, repeating the information from **part (a)**.

Question 3

(a) Examine the importance of the birth rituals for Muslim families.

Fewer candidates chose this question and whilst it was challenging for some, others excelled at it and gave a good account, with great detail, of the different birth rituals.

Stronger candidates wrote about the importance of these rituals, such as the health benefits, the spiritual aspects, and that it is something that is required in Islam. Many also explained that by performing these rituals Muslims were following the path (Sunnah) of the Prophet. Many mentioned the Hadith where the Prophet (pbuh) did these rituals at the birth of his grandsons Hassan and Hussein.

Relevant quotes from the Qur'an and Hadith were found in some responses.

(b) 'Physical purification helps Muslims to go to paradise (*jannah*).' Evaluate this statement.

Those who attempted this question did well and explained how physical purification (*wudu/ghusl*) or keeping the body clean in general is important for Muslims. Actions/religious duties that require physical purification were explored, such as prayer, fasting and reading the Qur'an.

The strongest responses were able to give alternative viewpoints, that there are other aspects of Islam which help Muslims go to paradise, such as being performing the Five Pillars, treating people well and having strong faith.

Another alternative view could have been that physical purification is not enough, spiritual purification (such as purification of mind through sincerity of intention, or purification of the heart through the statement of faith (*shahadah*)) is also required to enter paradise (*jannah*).

There were many quotes used to support answers for this question, such as 'Cleanliness is half of faith' (Hadith), 'Wudu washes away sins of a person', 'God loves those who are clean' (Qur'an).

ISLAMIC STUDIES

Paper 9488/22
Written Paper 22

Key messages

- Candidates found **Questions 1 and 2** equally popular choices, followed by **Question 4** in **Section B**.
- The Prophet's birthday proved a popular question and was well answered. This was a new topic on the specification to which candidates have responded very well.
- Beliefs of the Mu'tazilah and al-Ash'ari were not well known and could be better researched.
- The full range of answers was seen from excellent marks down to lower scoring scripts.
- Many responses were not well structured and could be improved with attention to essay style.
- Writing definitions, conclusions and naming positions such as schools of thought would help make responses much clearer.
- Responding to specific questions asked was much more important than writing long answers: the longest answers rarely scored highly unless they were well focused.

General comments

- For **Section A**, the five-mark introductory questions require short answers. Candidates should not add lengthy descriptions here as they will then disadvantage themselves by leaving less time for the longer answers.
- Candidates should be encouraged to write more concisely, for example one side of A4 for 10-mark answers and one and a half sides for 15-mark answers. Answers written which were well focused and concise gained more marks than lengthy, less focused responses.
- Well-structured responses wrote in short paragraphs of between five and ten lines approximately, clearly beginning with a main point linked directly to the question. Paragraphs would go on to support that point with evidence and examples.
- Where candidates are asked to respond giving details from one or two schools of thought, they must name them. They are free to choose any, but not naming any will mean their response is unclear and does not necessarily enable them to display their knowledge well.
- Definitions of key words and Islamic terms were seldom made yet could form an important part of discussions. This is something candidates might improve upon.
- Candidates need to be more familiar with some subject areas, particularly beliefs of the Mu'tazilah and al-Ash'ari.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

- (a) **Give five family members who can inherit in Islam.**

All that was required for this question was a list of five family members who can inherit. This could be any five, according to any school of thought, so even if there was a difference between schools then the person was credited. There was no need to add any detail or state the proportion inherited in this part. Note that generally non-blood relatives are not entitled to inherit; that is not to say that some are not given legacies by choice of the person who died, but generally they do not inherit by right.

(b) Explain questions of inheritance according to one school of thought in Islam.

The strongest responses clearly stated which school of thought they would be focusing on in their answer, such as Hanafi. Weaker responses did not do so and just wrote in general about inheritance. According to school chosen, considerations include Qur'an, Hadith, consensus (*ijma'*) of scholars as well as the needs of the people and general principles of fairness and justice, which Muhammad (pbuh) and his followers and later companions (*sahaba*) responded to. Some consideration of local customs (*'urf*) might also be made. Examples of calculations for family members, according to that school of thought, provided evidence of detailed understanding.

(c) 'Matters of inheritance should apply equally to men and women.' To what extent may this be applied in Islam? Refer to one school of thought in your answer.

Most candidates knew about the general importance of equality in Islam and quoted Muhammad (pbuh) to evidence this. They often balanced this against Islamic *shariah* traditions about giving more inheritance to males, due to traditional cultural roles, such as paying for the needs of the family. Due to this, some argued, the share an individual might end up spending on themselves might end up being practically the same and therefore equality achieved. The strongest answers recognised that there were different points of view, whether they agreed with them, such as the modern, secular emphasis on equality as opposed to traditional revealed *shariah* about matters of inheritance.

Question 2

(a) Give five schools of thought or approaches in Islam.

About the same proportion of candidates chose **Question 2** as **Question 1** and answers overall gained similar marks, showing they did not find one or the other more difficult. This question was very well answered. Most candidates specified Hanafi, Shafi'i, Maliki, Hanbali and Jafari as five schools of thought. Some chose Salafi as the fifth or Shi'i or different branches of Shi'i. As most branches, such as Hanafi, come within Sunni Islam, candidates could not gain an additional mark for Sunni. Reformist as a modern approach was also credited.

(b) Explain how shariah rulings are made according to one school of thought.

Clear answers named the school of thought they were answering from in the first line of their answer, for example: 'this answer will explain how shariah rulings are made according to the Maliki school of thought.' Strong responses were detailed and specific, whereas weaker ones mentioned the basics of Qur'an and Hadith and did not go much beyond that, except possibly mentioning the consensus of scholars (*ijma'*) and analogy (*qiyas*). Strong answers mentioned the order they were used in, any special priority or consideration according to that school of thought, such as consideration of the habits of the Medinans by Malik. A specific example, such as a ruling and how it was made for a particular issue, provided evidence of excellent knowledge and understanding.

(c) 'There are no significant differences between the methods used by different schools of thought.' Do you agree? Discuss this statement with reference to two schools of thought.

The key word in the statement is 'significant'. Strong candidates recognised this and explained that whatever differences there were amounted to small, insignificant ones. The resulting *shariah* rulings would be the same, based on the Sunnah of the Prophet (pbuh). Others argued that differences were significant, especially for schools of thought outside the four traditional Sunni madhabs, such as the differences with some Shi'i schools or modern reformist positions. Weaker responses missed the word 'significant' and understood the statement simply as no differences or some differences. Other weaker responses omitted to name a second school of thought.

Question 3

(a) Explain the teachings of al-Ash'ari about the oneness of God (*tawhid*) and the afterlife (*'akhirah*).

Few candidates chose this question. Those who did often wrote in general about the Islamic beliefs of the oneness of God (*tawhid*) and (*'akhirah*). The Ash'ari position represents a mainstream

theological position within Sunni Islam and so candidates were likely to be on the right lines by describing Sunni beliefs but to evidence detailed knowledge it was necessary to be exact. Al-Ash'ari taught that the essence of God was unknowable to human beings. God is eternal, absolute and independent. The oneness of God is known from the Qur'an, the uncreated word of God. God is just, even though humans do not always understand this and see injustice in the world, because they do not know God's plan. This plan is predestined, so are all actions, although the intention behind them are a matter of human choice on which God makes judgement for the afterlife.

- (b) Evaluate the extent to which teachings of the Mu'tazilah about the oneness of God (*tawhid*) and the afterlife (*'akhirah*) are different from al-Ash'ari.**

Few candidates made strong responses to this question, with most scoring low marks. The Mu'tazilah are rationalists and their views are often contrasted with those of al-Ash'ari, and sometimes viewed as outside of mainstream Islam. In evaluating the extent of differences, candidates might point out that both groups agreed on the oneness of God (*tawhid*) and the idea that God is just and promotes justice. Differences include the createdness of the Qur'an, made by humans according to the Mu'tazilah, as a source for information on the oneness of God (*tawhid*). The Mu'tazilah also considered injustice in this world to be perfectly balanced with reward in the afterlife, whereas the Ash'ari did not consider balance to be an essential part of God's plan. Conclusions should weigh up the extent of differences overall.

Question 4

- (a) Explain why the birthday of the Prophet (pbuh) might be celebrated according to some Muslims.**

This was a popular question and quite well answered. Candidates argued that the birthday was celebrated for various reasons and in different ways. Some mentioned that the Qur'an refers to this as: 'A Mercy for all creatures.' (Qur'an 21:107), and that Muhammad (pbuh) was a perfect model for Muslims to follow, learn about and take into their hearts as a beloved prophet. Celebrating could be cultural and educational, helping Muslims to feel good about their heritage and inspire others with information about the origins of Islam. Various other reasons and traditions were credited. Note that this question asked candidates to show understanding of the reasons, not to agree with them. The debate over whether the event should be celebrated or not was the focus of **part (b)**.

- (b) Compare the views of those who do not celebrate the birthday of Muhammad (pbuh) with those who celebrate it.**

The best responses structured paragraphs around points of comparison. Scholar Ibn Taymiyya did not celebrate, arguing that it was not to be found in the practices of the companions (*sahaba*) and might be an innovation (*bid'ah*), counting as bad deeds upon a Muslim at judgement. There is no reference about it in the Qur'an or Hadith. Some argued that the festival is either disapproved (*makruh*), or forbidden (*haram*). In comparison, many mentioned that there is no record of celebrations being forbidden, and they were allowed under the 'Abbasid Caliphate. They suggested that linking celebration with learning about Muhammad (pbuh) might bring reward. Celebration could be done sensitively, within the bounds of Islamic tradition, without over-indulgence. Some concluded that overall, it might depend upon a person's intention, drawing together comparisons in a short conclusion at the end.

ISLAMIC STUDIES

Paper 9488/32
Written Paper 32

Key messages

- **Question 1** on the Umayyads was more popular than **Question 2** on the 'Abbasids. However, some of the responses for **Question 2** scored more highly overall.
- Candidates were stronger on AO1 knowledge-based questions than AO2 evaluative questions.
- There were some excellent answers on philosophy but not many chose this question.
- Comparisons were not well answered. Candidates might improve such responses by taking an analytical approach and pointing out similarities and differences clearly, rather than writing about one side factually, then the other.
- Most responses were not well structured. It is important to write in clear, short paragraphs, each with a focus. Long, less focused answers rarely scored well.
- The focus of responses to architecture and philosophy required some reference to Muslims today, which was sometimes missing. Best responses clearly focused on the exact wording of the question.

General comments

- Knowledge of the 'Abbasids needs to be in more detail, for example by making links with Hadith collection and the formation of the schools of law (*shariah*), so that candidates gain a rounded view of the development of Islam in this period.
- Candidates might practice evaluation questions, to address AO2. Candidates need to make links and structure their responses. Some deferred to knowledge, but marks are not given for knowledge on **part (b)** questions here, so they did not gain high scores even with good knowledge for these questions.
- The coverage of the topic of Islamic philosophy is improving. Some good answers were seen.
- Comparisons might be made analytically, or at least by drawing a point from one side then the other. Essays which wrote all about one side, based on factual knowledge, then switched to the other, again based on factual knowledge, did not necessarily point out any comparisons at all. Strong answers clearly stated what the difference or similarity was in the first line of each paragraph, then evidenced it in detail.
- The importance and influence of architecture and philosophy on Muslims today required some reference to modern times, inspiration, expression of beliefs and possibly *da'wah*. This was not always well understood by candidates and might be further discussed when covering these topics.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

- (a) **Describe ways in which the Umayyads developed their leadership of the Caliphate. You should refer to Fig. 1.1 and your own knowledge in your answer.**

This was a popular question and reasonably well answered. Many referred to the source, Caliph Hisham's palace, and explained that this showed continuity with Roman architecture, symbolising the continuity in trade and other practices, which in many ways the Umayyads made to run more effectively and fairly than their predecessors. Candidates referred to change as well, with all signs of imagery of people or animals removed from the archway decoration, in line with Islamic tradition. Other ways in which the Umayyads developed their leadership, such as expanding territory and introducing coinage, were also mentioned by many candidates.

- (b) **Evaluate which was the most successful feature of Umayyad leadership. Explain your answer.**

Candidates came up with several successful features but did not always compare them and few clearly identified a 'most' successful feature. Strong responses began by defining what successful features they were going to write about in a short introductory paragraph of four or five lines, followed by a series of paragraphs taking one feature in each. This gave a clear structure and focus to each paragraph. Successful features included personality of the Caliph, development of religious leadership such as with facilities, economic policy and trade such as with coinage, or Arabisation with the use of the Arabic language across a wider area. Many concluded that the expansion of the rule of Islam from the Mediterranean to Persia was the most successful leadership achieved and gave details about how that was done and why it was more successful than other features.

Question 2

- (a) **Examine ways in which 'Abbasid Caliphs followed the Sunnah. You should refer to Fig. 2.1 and your own knowledge in your answer.**

Although this was a less popular question, candidates responded very well and were able to write a lot about the source. The source shows a discussion between scholars of different backgrounds (shown by different colours). Their expressions and hand movement positions show signs of scholarly debate typical of that developed under the 'Abbasids. The book may be a Qur'an or religious book, showing further signs of how the 'Abbasids encouraged religious scholarship. Apart from the source, Hajj processions led by the Caliph, mosques and prayer facilities and fairness and justice through trade and in society were ways in which the Sunnah was followed and promoted.

- (b) **Compare the extent to which the Umayyads and 'Abbasids followed the Sunnah.**

Most candidates argued that it varied with each Caliph and that some Umayyads, such as Umar II, followed the Sunnah in many respects, giving details, despite some others having a reputation for less Islamic activities. The 'Abbasids are often considered to have followed the Sunnah more closely. The example of 'Abbasid Caliph Harun al-Rashid leading Friday prayers in the mosque in Baghdad and performing the pilgrimage (Hajj) on several occasions was used. He and other 'Abbasids saw their role as religious as well as political and so wanted to show their people that they followed the Sunnah closely. However, it was possible for candidates to choose either and make a clear argument, as long as they made their case and backed it up with evidence, coming to a clear conclusion at the end.

Question 3

- (a) **Explain the main features of Islamic philosophy (*falsafah*).**

Although not many candidates responded to this question, those who did made good responses. These included making the point that Islamic philosophy included rational explanation of big questions such as the origins of the universe, definitions of truth, how to use logic and make an argument. The translation movement in Baghdad provided the context, where works by Aristotle were translated. Some candidates referred to works they had studied, such as Hayy ibn Yaqzan, showing how a philosopher's tale could explain key Islamic beliefs through observation of the universe without necessarily referring to revealed text. Most Islamic philosophers, nevertheless, set their works within the confines of mainstream Qur'anic teaching.

- (b) **Compare Islamic philosophy (*falsafah*) with the philosophy of the Greeks.**

The writers and supporters of each position often debated with each other, referencing works of Greek philosophy by Plato and Aristotle and Islamic philosophy by al-Farabi, Ibn Sina and Ibn Rushd. Comparisons made in this question sometimes consisted of writing half the essay about one then switching to the other – a less successful approach than taking an analytical structuring and comparing points such as use of logic by both in one paragraph, side by side. Clear responses managed this better through structuring their arguments. Candidates might be encouraged to practice discussion and debate and how to develop their arguments in this way, to move beyond a narrative based approach, which may limit the effectiveness of any comparisons made.

Question 4

(a) Examine the importance of architecture for Muslims.

This question required the description and explanation of Islamic architecture. That means it was not sufficient to describe famous mosques: their importance needed to be explained. The openness of this question meant that candidates could choose to refer to different examples to make their points, and many did so, referring to examples like the Blue Mosque in Turkey and the Great Mosque of Damascus. The importance included functional features such as the *mimbar* for delivering the sermon (*khutbah*) and minaret for the call to prayer, as well as the importance in terms of projecting the greatness of Islam, providing *da'wah* to others and inspiring Muslims with the beauty of these works reflecting Islamic beliefs.

(b) Compare the influence of philosophy with architecture for Muslims today.

Those candidates who recognised the word 'today' in the question focused their answers much more effectively than those who wrote in general about the influence of both. Some Muslims today are more able to travel and experience the wonders of Islamic architecture, finding inspiration in the marvels they contain and helping them to practice their faith. Others are able to read anew works of philosophy finding deeper meaning to the questions posed through the ages. Both are able to facilitate interaction with non-Muslims and provide a context for discussion and debate. The strongest responses were able to elaborate on these points and come to an overall conclusion about which they found more influential at the end of their essays.

ISLAMIC STUDIES

Paper 9488/42
Written Paper 42

Key messages

Overall, a full range of responses was seen. Candidates performed equally well on all questions.

Candidates should read the question and try to understand what is being asked before putting pen to paper.

Equal marks are given for each question and candidates should address the questions where they know they can score more, not because it seems easy, but because they have understood the question and know they will engage better with the question.

General comments

- The majority of candidates chose to answer **Question 1** and **2**. The strongest answers focused precisely on the exact wording of the question, and often dealt with clear definitions of words, demonstrating evidence of clear understanding.
- Less strong answers often wrote generally about the topic rather than addressing the angle required by the question set.
- When asked for different points of view, better candidates showed they were aware of different perspectives by writing clear paragraphs, each about a different view.
- Candidates demonstrated different ways of answering some of the questions, which were equally valid.
- The topic of women in Islam is a favourite with candidates, but they should read the question well and make sure that they are answering the question asked and not writing generally about how the status of women changed with the coming of Islam.
- Candidates who showed that they had researched the topics further by using relevant quotes from Islamic sources such as the Qur'an and Hadith or other Islamic books achieved higher levels.
- Many of the responses were descriptive but most of the marks in this paper are for evaluation, so candidates need to discuss/evaluate in their answers.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

'It is difficult for Muslim women to be promoters of knowledge.' How far do you agree with this statement?

This was a very popular question. The range of answers was quite diverse. Those candidates who made use of alternative views to support their answers attained higher levels. The importance of education in Islam was found as an introduction in most responses.

Responses included the different reasons that can prevent women from being promoters of knowledge such as the difficulty for women to access knowledge compared to men because of their role as wives/mothers, restrictions imposed by cultures and norms in traditional Muslim society that insist on women staying at home. Interestingly Islamophobia and restrictive laws against Muslim women were also quoted as reasons for women being impeded from attaining education.

Candidates referred to women from the past such as Aisha and Lubna of Cordoba, and showed how they promoted knowledge in the period they lived in. Malala was the preferred choice for a present-day woman who upholds the seeking and sharing of knowledge. However, her example was used both for and against

the statement because while she encouraged girls' education and campaigned for it, this led to her being the target of an assassination attempt.

Stronger responses concluded that there is nothing in Islam which prevents women from being active members in society and promoting the spread of knowledge, if they abide by Islamic laws. The easy access to education nowadays as well as the rise of technology and social media were shown as means to help women to promote knowledge. There was also use of statistics, such as the number of girls compared to boys who are in full-time education to support the arguments. Weaker responses made reference to what the change of status of woman from the pre-Islamic period meant.

Candidates need to know about the different women in the syllabus and to use only the ones relevant to the question, e.g. Khadija and Razia Sultana were referred to for this questions though it was not clear how they were relevant for the promotion of knowledge.

Question 2

Discuss how Muslim leaders can promote justice and human rights. Refer to either women or non-Muslims in your answer.

This was not a very popular question and was not well answered.

Most candidates understood that the question was asking about ways for leaders to treat people with justice and to honour their basic rights. However, the responses were weak for lack of enough information on the subject.

Those who attempted this question chose to focus on treatment of non-Muslims by Muslim leaders, and there were many references to the charter of Medina where the Prophet (pbuh) ensured that the human rights of all those living in Medina were protected. Strong responses included references to religious tolerance and collective responsibility. Weaker responses covered the qualities required for leaders in general without engaging with the question.

As this was a 'how' question, responses should have focused more on the ways to do this and not on why it is done. The easiest way is by following the Qur'an and Sunnah, then contemporary or current examples could have been added to add more weight to the answer. Application of Islamic teachings is what was required. Responses could also include how rights of women could be protected and ways to ensure they get equal treatment to men.

Examples of quotes from the Qur'an and Hadiths for this question could be: 'There is no compulsion in religion' and the Hadith 'When one man is killed it is as if the whole humankind who has been murdered'.

Question 3

Evaluate different ways in which Muslims could improve inter-faith and community relations. Refer to a country of your choice where Muslims form a minority in your answer.

This question had mixed responses, they could be excellent or quite weak.

Most responses included education as the best means to improve community cohesion and inter-faith relations, either educating Muslims about universal values, or values which are common to all religions, or educating non-Muslims about the Islamic values to dispel myths and misconceptions about each other's religions. Some also mentioned that this could be attained by Muslims abiding by the laws of the countries they live in and being involved in community events, such as caring for the down-trodden, volunteering in foodbanks, soup kitchens etc. Interestingly, one response argued that to maintain community cohesion Muslims in India should avoid using cows, which are considered holy for Hindus, for sacrifice for Eid-ul-Adha.

Other ways mentioned is to provide people with a positive image/understanding of Islam and Muslims, were by organising inter-faiths events, such as conferences, group discussions on topics or by inviting non-Muslims to participate with Muslims in their celebrations, e.g. at Eid or for the breaking of the fast (*Iftar*) during Ramadan.

Reference was made to the charter of Medina where the Prophet (pbuh) drafted the clauses to ensure understanding and good community cohesion between people from different faiths. Reference was also

made to leaders of the past such as Akbar and Aurangzeb in India, with contrasting treatment for non-Muslims under their rule.

The best answers showed that Muslims should focus on common ground with people of other faiths and not let the limitations of some of the Islamic restrictions (e.g. forbidden (*haram*) products, such as alcohol and pork) stop them from trying. Responses referred to countries such as Canada, Indonesia, India and the UK.

Candidates could have used the following quotes for this answer: Qur'an 8:61: 'And if they incline to peace, then incline to it (also) and rely upon Allah and Qur'an 3:64: 'People of the Book! Come now to a word common between us and you...'

An area where candidates can improve is by including their own country or any country of their choice and show how things are being done there. They can refer to the Muslims of the past for context, but the core of the answer should be about contemporary issues.