

ISLAMIC STUDIES

Paper 9013/01

Paper 1

General Comments

Most candidates appeared well prepared for the examination and there were a number of excellent scripts from a range of Centres. Many candidates demonstrated a sound knowledge of the subject. **Questions 1, 3, 4, 7, 11 and 12** remained the most popular and were answered satisfactorily. **Questions 2, 5, and 8** were less popular and less well answered. Very few candidates attempted **Question 9** and **10**. Candidates are encouraged to read the questions carefully before answering in order to realise the specific requirements of them.

Comments on Specific Questions

Section A

Question 1

The majority of candidates answered this question reasonably well, although some answers were very general statements about the life of the Prophet.

Question 2

- (a) Most candidates were able to offer relevant information, some however lacked development.
- (b) Stronger candidates explained very well the importance of the people of Medina in the early years of Islam.

Question 3

- (a) In this part candidates were expected to explain why Abu Bakr thought it necessary to resist the false prophets who rose up in his time. Most candidates were able to achieve high marks but some only stated the history of false prophets.
- (b) Part (b) was generally well answered. There were some very good answers where candidates were able to provide factual information as well as explanation and evaluation.

Section B

Question 4

- (a) This question was quite well answered by the majority of candidates. There were some excellent answers from candidates who presented well detailed accounts including dates, names and specific circumstances.
- (b) In this part candidates were required to explain why early Muslims thought they should make a written copy of the Qur'an. A number of candidates repeated the answer from part (a).

Question 5

- (a) Most candidates performed reasonably well in part (a). Some candidates appeared to misinterpret the question and only translated the surah, al-Fatihah.
- (b) This part of the question was not answered so well but the best candidates gave references from the Qur'an to make an authentic and compelling answer.

Question 6

This question was very well answered with many candidates achieving high levels.

Section C

Question 7

This question was very popular and many of the candidates who attempted it did well. There were some outstanding quality responses to this question.

Question 8

- (a) The question was very well answered. In this part many candidates were able to describe the distinctive features of a Muslim marriage ceremony and a Muslim funeral with detailed examples.
- (b) Some candidates experienced difficulty with this part of the question as they were unable to relate these observances to the principles of early Islam. They tended to concentrate on the pre-Islamic Arabian society. There were a few good answers to this part of the question.

Question 9

This question was not popular as a very small number of candidates attempted it. Answers to part (a) and (b) revealed a very limited understanding of the subject matter.

Section D

Question 10

Again this was the least popular question and the few candidates that attempted it did not do very well.

Question 11

This was the most popular question in this section and many of the candidates did it well. There were some excellent answers from the candidates who revealed a reasonable level of knowledge of the Qur'an and Sunnah.

Question 12

The question was well answered by most candidates. Part (a) was generally much better attempted than part (b). Many candidates were able to provide a detailed account of the legal principles of *ijma'* and *qiyas*. Part (b) was poorly answered as many failed to appreciate that the question asked candidates to explain how these sources of Islamic law can be put into practice in Muslim societies today and this was not addressed properly. There was however, some exceptionally good knowledge and understanding expressed by a number of candidates.

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Paper 2

General comments

The general standard of essays was good and candidates, especially in the middle range, had notably improved their answers. There were fewer exceptionally good answers at the higher end and fewer responses at the lower end as well.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

This question was popular and well answered. Most candidates were able to give sufficient detail of the main events in the fall of the Umayyad dynasty. The best responses made comparisons between Umayyad weakness and other factors such as 'Abbasid strength. Other factors included insurrection and problems from provinces within the Empire, who had developed a measure of autonomy, as well as the extravagance and lack of Islamic values amongst some of the rulers.

Question 2

'Abbasid power tended to fracture as local areas became autonomous and those administrators effectively set up their own fiefdoms. The best answers explored details and examples of these as well as considering factors such as the decline of religious value, inevitability due to the size and communication issues within the Empire, rift with the Shi'a, but also the complexity of the issue. It was not a straightforward decline but there were periods of revival, for instance. Few candidates attempted this question but those that did generally made reasonable responses.

Question 3

This question was interpreted in different ways. Some candidates compared the whole of the Umayyad caliphs to the whole of the 'Abbasids, whereas others interpreted the question to mean which individual caliph from all of those was the greatest. Both interpretations were accepted as valid and there were a great variety of responses. The best answers justified their reasons by comparing that Caliph or Empire with the other and taking several factors such as religious, political, military, scientific achievement and social.

Question 4

The best answers to this question explained the legal working using Qur'an, Sunnah, *ijma* and *qiyas* and the similarity between the four Madhabs as well as the differences, so that these could be seen in context. The best answers were able to articulate the importance of Madinah in Maliki thinking, Shafi strictures in adherence to scripture and so on. This question was well answered by those candidates who were able to provide sufficient detail in their responses.

Question 5

The exhaustive and methodical processes for verification of Hadith, both *isnad* and *matn*, carried out by al-Bukhari and Muslim, were required here. This question was well answered by those who answered in sufficient detail and referred to both verification of the character of the narrators in the chain – as well as the chain itself, as well as the harmony of the subject matter with the Qur'an and other authenticated Hadith.

Question 6

This question was generally well answered. Note that the best answers referred specifically to the concept of justice in the afterlife held by the Mu'tazilah in part (a), rather than simply explaining their beliefs in general. These responses went on to explain the importance of human free will and the day of reckoning when suffering would be balanced out by reward in the afterlife. Part (b) was also well answered with historical details about Hasan al-Ash'ari backed up with details about differences of belief that could not be reconciled, such as the importance of reason and the perceived denial of God's authorship of the written Qur'an.

Question 7

This question was quite well answered. Some candidates did not make reference to the events of Kerbala in part (a) but the best responses explained both that as well as the historical significance both before and after. Part (b) was very well answered with details about the power of Imams in Shi'a Islam to interpret text, lead their community in spiritual matters without question and follow in unbroken line from 'Ali and Fatima.

Question 8

This question was well answered, better so than other questions on the same topic in previous years. Candidates were generally able to answer part (a) with reference in detail to aspects of Sufi Islam such as *dhikr* and its practices, as well as concepts of *Muris* and *Sheikh* within Tariqah. Other aspects of Sufi devotion were articulated in detail. Part (b) required some detailed knowledge and was completed well by those who were able to give specific references.

Question 9

Very few candidates chose to answer this question. Candidates could have drawn in differences in approach compared to ancient Greek philosophers and the importance of reason compared to revelation. Those who could maintain a discussion around that, based in the historical context of Islamic philosophy with reference to Al-Ghazali and some of his critics, achieved well.

Question 10

As with previous years, very few candidates chose to answer this question, but the few that did made reasonable responses. For part (a) the main features of al-Banna's reinvigoration of Islamic teaching with the Muslim brotherhood was required, and for part (b) the historical development with the Egyptian state including his resistance to British rule in Egypt.

Question 11

This was a popular question but on the whole there were very few exceptional answers. Many general comments were made with some discussion about women's place in modern society, but the very best answers were specific about Islamic teachings and discussed these in relation to the quotation given. For example, the duties of a woman in the upbringing of children were balanced against the right to education.

Question 12

This question was generally not well answered because few candidates referred to the Qur'an and examples of Muhammad (pbuh) as was specifically asked for in the question, and made on general comments about Islamic teaching. Some candidates made comments about political conflicts of the Prophet and other communities, but the best responses were from those who specifically quoted from Qur'an and Sunnah and explained what these teachings meant in terms of living alongside those of other faiths.