

ISLAMIC RELIGION AND CULTURE

Paper 2056/01

Paper 1

General comments

The performance of candidates on this paper has improved year on year. Teachers are advised to remind candidates to read each question carefully before attempting their answers. This would enable them to focus on what is asked and respond accordingly. It is worth noting that part **(a)** has equal weighting with part **(b)**. It is observed that candidates are often able to do part **(a)**. Answering part **(b)** seems more challenging. Both must be answered to get a good overall mark for a question. Candidates made good use of their time and most answered five questions.

Comments on specific questions

Section A

Question 1

- (a)** This question was attempted by most candidates. Good answer focused on the importance of Mecca before the coming of Islam as a place of pilgrimage since time immemorial, and an important trading centre situated on crossroads of trade routes. It is important not to be too general.
- (b)** Good answers were from candidates who wrote about the socio-economic changes that took place when people became Muslim such as the system of 'brotherhood', the much improved status of women and the payment of zakat. This was one question where it was important to read the question and not write only about changes in religious beliefs and practices.

Question 2

- (a) (i)** This part of the question was well answered. Candidates knew why the boycott had taken place and how long it lasted. Few candidates focused on Muslims having been reduced to eating leaves and others on how they were still supported by family members that were not included in the boycott who brought food to them when they could.
- (ii)** Good answers mentioned the Prophet's magnanimous nature, praying that the people of Taif would become Muslim even after he had been mocked and chased out of the city.

Candidates should differentiate between **(i)** and **(ii)** in order to gain the highest marks.

- (b)** Candidates who wrote about the hijra being a total break from all that was familiar to the Prophet and the Muslims in Mecca and moving to Medina where the first Muslim community/state was established produced better answers than those who looked upon the hijra as the beginning of a widespread Muslim empire. To get the higher marks answers needed to go beyond the establishment of brotherhood in Medina and the freedom they now had of practicing Islam.

Question 3

- (a)** This question was not attempted by many candidates. Good answers gave details of the guidelines the Prophet laid down in Medina for an egalitarian society such as spreading peace, brotherhood, justice and dignity for everyone, same rights and duties for all inhabitants. Further additions were made to the life of Muslims such as the five daily prayers, fasting and giving zakat.

- (b) Candidates need to be aware that the pagan Arab tribes were not the same as the Jews of Arabia or the Christians. Good answers avoided this confusion and were able to demonstrate knowledge of how the Prophet came as a peacemaker to Medina, eager to win the confidence of those the Muslims regarded as *ahl-e-kitab* (People of the Book), and the reasons why the situation between the Muslims and Jews deteriorated over time.

Question 4

- (a) This part was well answered. Candidates managed to put the events in chronological order beginning with the Meccans wanting to crush the Muslims once and for all till when bitter winds and cold made them retreat. This was a real and symbolic defeat for them.
- (b) This was a popular question, though many answers were brief and inaccurate. Some candidates saw the 'worldwide spread of Islam' as the only answer to this question. Better answers were able to focus on the significance of the victory in the relatively short term beginning with how the Muslims prepared to face their enemy knowing they were totally outnumbered, their willingness to try anything new suggested to them and the prolonged duration of the siege which was difficult for the Muslims with supplies running low.

Question 5

- (a) This was a popular question. There were many good answers in this part where candidates were able to put the events of that time in chronological order. The point was also made that even before Mecca became a Muslim city every Arab had an inalienable right to visit the Ka'aba. The Meccans being custodians of the shrine could not stop anyone from visiting, but did so because they were afraid of the Muslims.
- (b) It was important to focus answers on the significance of the relationship of the Prophet and his followers during this time at Hudaibiyah and not in the aftermath of Badr and Uhud. Good answers mentioned how the Muslims believed implicitly in the Prophet and his leadership, they still voiced their opinions clearly, and he listened to what they had to say. Some candidates mentioned how he always led by example when he sacrificed the animal he had brought despite not having done the pilgrimage. All those who were with him did the same.

Question 6

- (a) Good answers began from when Ali became Muslim as a child, was later a great warrior in battle, and how he was one of the scribes of the Prophet. They mentioned Ali's close relationship with him as his son in law and that he slept in the Prophet's bed at the time of hijra.
- (b) Good answers here showed some accurate understanding of Ali's caliphate, his priority was to consolidate and reorganise the caliphate first rather than find the assassins of 'Uthman. This reasoning had dire consequences for peace in the vast territories that were now Muslim. Most candidates mentioned his problems with Mu'awiya. To improve answers an overall assessment of the few years he was caliph could have been included.

Section B

Question 7

- (a) The best responses to this question were from candidates who after saying the Qur'an was revealed over 23 years and compiled during the time of Abu Bakr, went on to write about the actual structure of the book and the details about its parts.
- (b) Candidates who attempted this part did well with their understanding of the importance of the Qur'an as a foundation of Muslim belief and a source of Divine knowledge. They knew Qur'anic verses are used in daily worship and that it is a book for people to think and reflect on what they read. Answers needed to go beyond the blessings received by reading it daily.

Question 8

- (a) Able candidates had no difficulty in achieving high marks in this part. They began with Shahadah, the words of Sura Ikhlas, Allah's attributes of being Ar Rahman and Ar Rahim and countless others, and were able to explain what these meant in Muslim belief about Allah.
- (b) Sura Alaq was well known by most. Candidates had varying levels of success in explaining its importance to Muslims. Good answers consisted of an explanation of the importance of the verses as the first revelation, that Allah created human beings and granted them the gift of knowledge. Concepts such as 'that which he knew not' and 'the pen' were more difficult to explain.

Question 9

- (a) This was another well answered question by many candidates who recalled many events of Ibrahim's life, the fact that he believed in One God, smashed the idols and was tested by Allah about sacrificing his son. Others remembered he built the Ka'aba and his footsteps are there to see to this day. It was important to include only details mentioned in the Qur'an.
- (b) There were good answers here. Links were found in how they lived and how Muslims remember Ibrahim. The Prophet was a descendant of Ibrahim. They were both messengers of Allah and suffered persecution. Both are remembered by Muslims when reciting the 'durood' in the five daily prayers. Ibrahim built the Ka'aba and the Prophet placed Hajr-e-Aswad in its place after renovations. Rituals of Hajj laid out by the Prophet, follow the footsteps of Ibrahim all the way till the sacrifice is done on Id ul Adha in Mina, and all over the world.

Question 10

- (a) This was a popular question. Many candidates knew the sequence of events beginning from the 'niyyat' for Hajj. Mention was also made of the vital few hours spent as the 'wuquf' at Arafa and ending with 'tawaf-e-wida' on leaving Mecca. It was important to know the sequence of events and dates.
- (b) There were some good answers here. The concept of unity with reference to Hajj was understood. Some answers were repetitive on points of equality and brotherhood. More could have been written about everyone reciting the 'albiyah' in unison, wearing the 'ihraam' to signify equality on earth and a reminder of equality before Allah, circumambulating the Ka'aba together, and praying and supplicating at Arafa.

Question 11

- (a) Many candidates chose to answer this question. Good answers mentioned the consent of both bride and groom to marry, signing the marriage contract at the nikah and the prayers said by the Imam for the happiness of the couple. Candidates should not confuse the 'walima' (which is held by the groom's family after the marriage is consummated) with celebrations on the wedding day.
- (b) There were a few good attempts in this part. Good answers talked about the importance the Prophet gave to raising the status of women and also to marriage in Islam. He equated marriage to being 'half of faith'. Some answers mentioned both partners in a marriage being equal in the sight of Allah, their rights and duties in a marriage and sharing the good upbringing of children.

Question 12

- (a) This question was attempted by few candidates. Better answers included details of the criteria used for evaluating the character of the narrators and different criteria used to look at the text of the Hadith to be accepted as genuine. More was needed than listing the different levels of authenticity.
- (b) Good answers spoke of generosity which can be expressed in speech or by action, in not being judgemental towards others and in having a welcoming attitude towards everyone regardless.