

ISLAMIC STUDIES

Paper 9488/12 Islamic beliefs and practices
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Key messages

This was the second examination of the new syllabus.

Overall, a full range of responses was seen. Performance was considerably better than in the first session in November. Candidates performed equally well on all questions.

General comments

- Many candidates had learned great detail about the life of the Prophet (pbuh) which was reflected in their answer for **Question 1**, a compulsory question.
- For **Question 2** and **3**, where candidates had a choice, **Question 2** proved to be more popular, but not necessarily higher scoring.
- Candidates should ensure they directly address the words in the question, and not write about a topic in general.
- Clear paragraph structures were used by some, but not all, candidates. This is an area which might be developed, enabling candidates to more effectively build up their arguments, especially for responses to Assessment Objective 2 (AO2) questions.
- For **Question 1(a)** candidates should focus on the words in the passage and not write about the topic in a general manner.
- For **Question 1(b)**, candidates need to explain how a particular hadith was implemented by Muslims in the past or how it can be implemented by today's Muslims. There is no need to explain the hadith.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

- (a) This question was very well answered, and most candidates gained full marks, by referring to the topic of caring for orphans and not taking advantage of their vulnerability and keeping one's promises. Lengthy answers were not required. This question asks candidates to 'describe', which means to state the main features of a topic, so it did not require a long response.
- (b) This question was generally well answered, and most of the candidates referred to the hadith about good treatment of neighbours and guests. Strong candidates could identify incidents in the life of the Prophet (pbuh) where he treated his neighbours with kindness, for example when he went to visit a sick child from a neighbouring Jewish family. The story of the Prophet (pbuh) visiting the lady who used to put thorns on his path when she was ill was a favourite among candidates. Good responses included hadiths of the Prophet (pbuh) on good behaviour towards neighbours, where he encouraged sharing food with them, or not to harm them.

Many candidates also wrote about his treatment of his family members, especially his wives and how he would help them with the house chores, or his good behaviour with his companions which are all valid. To further explain the way the Prophet (pbuh) behaved with those living close to him, some candidates also mentioned his treatment of the Quraish. Treatment of the Jews was also included in some answers.

Examples from the life of the Prophet (pbuh) where he was generous to his guests were rare.

- (c) This question was not well answered as there was very little evaluation. While strong responses explained the importance in Islam of treating vulnerable people well, many candidates did not address what the term 'social care' may mean. Many responses covered points such as the obligation of paying *zakaat* to alleviate the difficulties of the poor, or to give charity.

Stronger responses included different views on how to extend social care, such as by visiting the sick, taking care of the elderly, doing voluntary work, raising awareness about environmental issues and global warming.

Candidates could have improved their answers by giving more evaluation and answering the 'to what extent' part.

Question 2

- (a) This question was extremely popular and very well answered. It is a knowledge-based question, and most candidates could explain that belief in God (*tawhid*) is the first belief of a Muslim, without which they fall out of the fold of Islam. Strong responses explained about the three categories of belief in God and the majority of answers include belief of God as Creator and sustainer. The best answers referred to suras from the Qur'an, especially sura 112 (*Al-Ikhlās*).

- (b) This question was well answered by most candidates and the evaluation was well done. The word 'only' in the question prompted evaluative answers from candidates. Candidates could argue that though important the Oneness of Allah is not the only essential belief.

Stronger responses referred to other articles of faith, such as belief in the last day, belief in the prophets or books, and so on as being essential for the completion of a Muslim's faith and explained in detail how each accomplished that.

Other candidates considered the belief in God as a Pillar of Islam (the testimony of faith) and argued that the other Pillars of Islam are as essential for a Muslim, Pillars such as prayer, which should not be missed at any cost, or almsgiving which helps to bring balance between rich and poor in society or fasting which makes the person performing it understand the pangs of hunger and make them want to help the poor.

Question 3

- (a) Fewer candidates chose this question and whilst it was challenging for some, others excelled at it and gave a good account of the different stages of the marriage ceremony and the conditions for its validity.

The best answers included how Muslim marriage takes place in a mosque in the presence of an Imam, the groom and the father of the bride. That it is a very solemn ceremony where the couple give their consent to the marriage in public and the mention of the dowry.

- (b) Those who attempted this question did well and explained the importance of marriage in Islam and how it benefitted both the individual and society. The strongest responses elaborated on the social benefits of marriage in different ways, such as the bonding between the families, the upbringing of children within a stable family unit and the prevention of fornication or promiscuity when couples are lawfully married. Many responses focussed on the life of the Prophet (pbuh) and his marriages, especially the special relationship that existed between him and Khadija.

While candidates agreed to the importance of marriage for society, more evaluation could have been included. To gain more marks candidates could have argued that there are more important factors for society than marriage, such as leading moral lives or being educated. Another way to answer this question was to say that marriage is more important for the individuals than for society.

ISLAMIC STUDIES

Paper 9488/22 Islamic law (<i>shariah</i>) and its application

Key messages

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

Performance was considerably better than in the first series in November for this paper, and on a par with, or even slightly better than, performance in Paper 1 in this series.

Candidates chose all questions but **Questions 1** and **3** were the most popular. Candidates performed equally well on all questions.

Many candidates had learned details about Islamic law and were inspired to write excellent answers for this paper, showing they had paid attention to the new syllabus requirements and excelled at it.

Some candidates chose to enter papers 1 and 2 in this series either to gain an AS Level or bank the results and complete papers 3 and 4 next year.

General comments

- Candidates should ensure they directly address the words in the question, and not write about a topic in general.
- Lengthy introductory paragraphs about the topic in general are not necessary. Some candidates wrote these and did not relate them to the specific focus of the question. If writing an introduction, it is better to address or define terms in the question and address these directly.
- Clear paragraph structures were used by some, but not all, candidates. This is an area which might be developed, enabling candidates to build up their arguments more effectively, especially for responses to Assessment Objective 2 (AO2) questions.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

- (a) This question was extremely popular and very well answered.

Lengthy answers were not required. This question asks candidates to 'state', which means simply to identify the actions. There is no need to explain the actions as the question was not asking for explanation, so candidates including this were taking away time they could have spent on other responses.

- (b) This question was generally well answered, and the vast majority of candidates noticed that the question was in the negative: circumstances when purification (*wudu*) may **not** be necessary, rather than when it is necessary. They also generally noticed that the question was about the circumstances and not the actions of purification (*wudu*).

Good responses considered states such as what if a person was ill and using water was either not possible or would cause them harm. Candidates referred to terms defined in Islamic law (*shariah*) according to one school of thought or approach, often from the perspective of the Sunni law schools.

- (c) It is important to address answers to **part (c)** according to the requirements for AO2. This means that lengthy paragraphs describing prayer and purification are not necessary.

Most candidates noticed the importance of the word 'connected' and addressed their responses accordingly. Few introduced their answers by considering what connected might mean, defining it in terms of Islam and a Muslim's worship. To do so might make for a very strong response. However, more candidates did come to address this during the body of their essay, or at the end in a concluding paragraph.

The best responses included the requirements of prayer according to Islamic law as well as the spiritual aspect of prayer and how performing purification (*wudu*) might mentally prepare a person to be clean and pure in front of their Lord in prayer. Some noted that there were other reasons for purification other than prayer, such as reading the Qur'an, and that there were other prayers such as personal prayers (*du'a*) which do not require purification (*wudu*).

Question 2

- (a) Candidates who chose this question performed well and generally equally well to those who chose question one. Candidates listed types of business or activities in business which might be considered forbidden (*haram*), or advisable to avoid (*makruh*). Both were acceptable.
- (b) There were some excellent answers to this question. It required knowledge of Islamic law (*shariah*) and was marked according to how well candidates could describe this knowledge in detail. Therefore, the best answers were precise in their identification of specific requirements, rather than generalised.
- (c) This question was very well answered. The strongest responses addressed the question directly and defined factors involved in the requirements for trade, going on to discuss which they thought was most important. Honesty was defined as one of those factors, with support given from the Qur'an and examples of Muhammad (pbuh) for making it an important factor. Whether it was the most important factor, or one among many, formed the basis of discussion. It could be seen as important in that it might lead to paradise in the afterlife, whereas cheating or telling lies in trade might lead to damnation.

Question 3

- (a) Most answers to this question were reasonable but there were some weaker responses, more than for other questions on the paper. The question asks for candidates' understanding of Shi'i Muslims' opinions on the importance of 'Ali, not Sunni Muslims' opinions or the differences between the two.

The best responses referred to the Hadith of Ghadir Khumm and its interpretation by Shi'i scholars. Good answers noted the importance of 'Ali as Imam, part of a line of Imams for the Shi'i, and the Hadith traditions and spiritual inspiration drawn from them. Visiting 'Ali's tomb in Najaf is also an important part of devotion for many Shi'i Muslims. Not all of these points were widely made by candidates. Better known were the words Shi'i Muslims say after the statement of faith during prayer, remembering 'Ali, showing his importance to them.

- (b) The focus here was on comparison of Shi'i and Sunni perspectives as to the importance of the Prophet's family, which some candidates had written in **part (a)** and repeated here. Good responses began by defining the family members they were going to talk about, including, for instance, the wives, children and descendants of Muhammad (pbuh).

The importance of the Prophet's family to the lineage of Shi'i Imams might be assessed, and their spiritual authority deriving from this. The respect given by Sunnis might be found similar or different, according to the analysis given by the candidate. The use of Aisha as a source narrator is considered differently by Shi'i and Sunni, another point which was made by only a few candidates. Generally, however, candidates gave clear answers and the point about authority through the Prophet's line was the basis of the conclusion offered by many.

Question 4

- (a) Fewer candidates chose this question and whilst it was challenging for some, others excelled at it and gave detailed descriptions of this Islamic belief. The word 'different' in the question was important in that candidates were required to consider a variety of perspectives, which many did by choosing to discuss the Mutazilite as opposed to the Ash'ari interpretation. Other schools of thought were also mentioned by many.

Strong responses mentioned the Qur'anic basis for the belief and various relevant Hadith. Some mentioned possible differences of perspective with Shi'i traditions. Different views might also refer to different times in a Muslim's life and experiences of different Muslims, which some mentioned.

- (b) Strong answers discussed both sides of the argument: that Muslims are able to influence their future and that they are not. Many defined free will and predestination and the path that Muslims might follow, whether this is set out in detail by God or whether it is chosen by humans but known in advanced by God. The particular issue of whether a Muslim can change their destination in the afterlife, according to God's judgement, was central to some arguments.

The best responses discussed the statement, focussing on 'influence' by Muslims themselves. Weaker responses missed the thrust of the statement or wrote only a one-sided argument. It was not necessary to agree with different views, but to show some understanding of the differences, before coming to a personal conclusion about them.

ISLAMIC STUDIES

Paper 9488/32 Heritage of Islam
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Key messages

This was the second examination of the new syllabus.

Candidates performed better in this series than in the first series in November.

There were examples of good responses to all questions, but the most popular questions were **Questions 1** and **4** on the Umayyads and Islamic gardens.

Candidates should check they follow all requirements of the question. When asked to make reference to the source, they should explicitly do so. Candidates who directly referred to the source tended to write more clearly and explain their answers more directly.

General comments

- The strongest answers focused precisely on the exact wording of the question, and often wrote clear definitions of words, demonstrating evidence of clear understanding.
- Less strong answers often wrote loosely about the topic rather than addressing the angle required by the question set.
- Where asked for different points of view, those candidates who clearly showed they were aware of different perspectives by writing clear paragraphs, each about a different view, wrote clearer answers.
- Candidates were clearly interested in the new topics covered by this paper and showed evidence of wider reading and research.
- A wide range of different material had been chosen for the questions referring to a work chosen by the candidate; and many different places were referred to for Islamic gardens, showing that candidates were taking advantage of the flexibility offered to them by the new syllabus for individual choice and independent research.
- Candidates demonstrated different ways of answering some of the questions, which were equally valid and achieved well.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

- (a) The strongest answers directly addressed the word 'promoted'. These included some excellent responses which considered a range of factors, including making written Qur'ans in readable script, to assist the correct recitation of the Qur'an and its spread, thereby promoting Islam far and wide and ensuring that it was spread in its authentic, original form. By referring to the Qur'an and the spread of Islam, candidates linked their answers with the source. A small number of candidates did not mention the source.

Other factors included providing support for pilgrims, facilities for prayer and washing, founding of schools, building of mosques, decorating them with inspiring artwork and calligraphy. Good answer gave examples.

Many mentioned Caliph Umar II, his example of personal piety which inspired people to follow Islam, and his openness to people of different backgrounds. Different candidates chose to follow different lines of description, and some described the military achievements of the Umayyads. A

few referred to the Umayyads tolerance of others, such as Christians living in Syria and how this encouraged some to take on the faith of Islam.

- (b) The best responses focused clearly on the Qur'an and sometimes quoted verses from it, to show how the Umayyads did or did not follow it, according to the argument made. Others write loosely about the Qur'an and about Islam in general, and whether or not the Umayyads followed Islamic teachings. Generally, the sharper the focus on the exact wording of the question, the better the response.

To make the case against the statement, many pointed out that different Umayyads ruled in different ways, and some did not follow the Qur'anic prohibition of drinking. Another good argument made was that different scholars and theologians have different opinions about the Umayyads. Many Shi'i Muslims tend to view them negatively and say that the events of Karbala were an injustice and so they did not follow the Qur'anic command to rule with justice and fairness.

Question 2

- (a) Fewer candidates chose this question but those who did performed equally well as those choosing **Question 1**. The source was recognised as showing the power of the 'Abbasids in a new region which they took over for the caliphate, imposing their presence through the architecture providing a demonstration of strong leadership to the people. This was extended by some candidates to detail how Baghdad was built as the 'Abbasid capital with its imposing, circular design.

'Strength' was referred to in different ways. Political strength was detailed by some candidates, by mentioning the ruthlessness of some caliphs in removing opponents and taking territory. Confidence was another aspect, shown by the inclusion of those of other ethnic backgrounds in government by the caliphs, who felt assured of their position and could further gain strength through a broader range of supporting peoples.

- (b) The first and most obvious point made by just about all candidates was that personalities changed because a new family dynasty had taken over the Caliphate. The best answers gave details about this, naming individuals and explaining their roles. Another point made was that the capital city moved to Baghdad, and details were given about this city and how it helped to rule over the caliphate.

Leadership could be defined in many ways, but few candidates offered any definition. It might, for instance, be defined in terms of leadership of territory, or in terms of trade, religious policy or control over learning and education. Some responses discussed some of these areas in detail, making for a wide-ranging discussion. Some discussed how learning was promoted more with the foundation of the House of Wisdom library. Others noted that perhaps learning did not change all that much.

The strongest answers drew together the various points made into a conclusion at the end, weighing up how far leadership changed. As with all of the AO2 discussion questions, it is the candidates' quality of written discussion and reasoning which demonstrates their ability and on which they are marked, regardless of what view they take.

Question 3

- (a) Candidates chose a range of different works to illustrate their answers. These included Ibn Tufayl's work Hayy ibn Yaqzan; al-Kindi's philosophy; writings of Maududi and others. There were some very strong answers as well as some weaker ones, from those who chose this question. Weaker responses wrote about Islamic beliefs in general, without identifying a named published work.

The focus of the question was to explain how Islamic beliefs are portrayed in the writing, rather than give a summary of the writing as a whole. In the case of Hayy ibn Yaqzan, there was a lot in the story which candidates could refer to, but the best answers clearly drew beliefs from this, such as how the belief in a single creator God was rationally drawn from Hayy's observation of the natural world. One or two brief, relevant quotes provided further evidence of a candidate's knowledge of the work they had chosen.

- (b) This was a popular question and well answered. Many candidates were clearly interested in this area and were able to engage in meaningful discussion about different methods of explanation of beliefs to others (*da'wah*). Strong responses stated different methods and went on to discuss them. These included preaching, discussion at shared meals, setting a good example through behaviour or character, providing charity to others, providing inspirational books to read, and providing guidance on social media over the internet.

Discussions included ways in which these methods might reach people and how effective they might be. The best responses considered a variety of different methods and people they might attract, as well as issues with some of them, such as how to ensure the accuracy of posts on social media. Less strong responses described rather than discussed the methods identified.

Question 4

- (a) **Question 4** was very popular and well answered. Many features were identified including the greenery, shade, trees and flowers. Best responses identified links to the Qur'an and Hadith to show how these represented paradise, and perhaps named some of them. Further features included the tricking, cooling water, representing the spring Kauthar in paradise, and the trickle or flow showing nothing is fixed or able to be used as a single point of focus.

Some answers approached this question differently by explaining a tour of an Islamic garden and explaining the features. The Shalimar Bagh in Lahore was the focus on some answers. If the focus and key words in the question are addressed, full marks can potentially be awarded for different approaches to the question, as was the case here.

- (b) Stronger responses evaluated whether gardens could be the best way to communicate an understanding of paradise to the mind of the Muslim. Weaker answers to this question often repeated many points made in answer to **part (a)**. Candidates should note the criteria for AO2, on which this question was marked, and ensure they focus on evaluation, the command word given.

Some very strong answers agreed with the quote, such as by showing the features which might otherwise be abstract and unimaginable; others pointed out that there is no way to understand a place that no living person has been to. This was a very well thought out position, well put. Other arguments made were that perhaps it was better to read the Qur'an and Hadith to understand paradise, since they provide detailed description in places and the features of Islamic gardens are drawn from them anyway.

Good answers clearly understood the significance of the word 'easiest' in their answers and addressed this in a summing up conclusion at the end. Again, the importance of focusing on the exact wording of the question was key to gaining the best marks.

ISLAMIC STUDIES

Paper 9488/42 Islam in the modern world
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Key messages

This was the second examination of the new syllabus.

Candidates performed better in this series than in the first series in November.

Candidates were given a choice of two questions out of three, majority chose to answer **Questions 2 and 3**.

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

General comments

- 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 loosely about the topic rather than addressing the angle required by the question set.
- Where asked for different points of view, those candidates who clearly showed they were aware of different perspectives by writing clear paragraphs, each about a different view, wrote clearer answers.
- Candidates demonstrated different ways of answering some of the questions, which were equally valid.
- The topic of women in Islam is popular, candidates should read the question well and make sure that they are answering the question asked, not writing general answers about the role and responsibilities of women in Islam.
- Candidates showed that they had researched the topics further by using relevant quotes from Islamic sources such as Qur'an/Hadith or other Islamic books.
- Candidates need to discuss/evaluate the material that they use to answer the questions on this paper, not just describe it, which limits the level candidates can achieve in the Levels of Response grids used for marking.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

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

Most candidates understood the laws of God to mean Islamic principles by which Muslims should abide, but they were not able to show that it was difficult for leaders to adhere to these. Some areas mentioned by strong candidates where leaders faced challenges were human rights (e.g. capital punishment), and the necessity to pay interest on loans from other countries.

Strong responses included reference to modern leaders like Zia ul Haqq, Syed Ahmed Khan and Iqbal though this was not required in the answer. Reference was also made to leaders from the past, like the four Rightly Guided Caliphs or Umar bin Abdul Aziz, for their strict adherence to the laws of Islam while maintaining a just rule.

Weaker responses covered qualities that a good leader needs to have, such as honesty, keeping to their promises, communication skills and so on. This was not what the question was asking. Candidates need to keep their focus and engage with the question asked.

Question 2

This was a very popular question where candidates scored well.

The strongest answers referred to contemporary women, such as Malala and wrote about the contribution of these women in the society they lived in. Candidates also referred to the contribution of other modern women who are not mentioned in the syllabus but are equally valid, women such as Benazir Bhutto (former Pakistani Prime Minister), Fatima Jinnah (younger sister of Muhammad Ali Jinnah and first Governor General of Pakistan), Asma Jahangir (Pakistani human rights activist) and Farhat Hashmi (Islamic scholar and Muslim television preacher), whose contribution in the field of knowledge today made her a favourite among the candidates. These candidates also referred to the fact that Islam has not prevented women from taking an active part in society if they abide by Islamic laws such as not neglecting their family/children and keeping to the Islamic code of dress.

Some of the answers were more focussed about the contribution of women as wives and mothers, as caregivers and nurturers but with limited social involvements. However, they showed that by raising good children these women were also contributing to their society, which was a valid point.

Some candidates also referred to women from the past such as Khadija, Aisha, and Lubna of Cordoba and showed their contribution/involvement in their society. However, as the question specifies a woman from modern times, reference to a modern woman was also needed.

Some candidates wrote much about the status of women from the time of pre-Islamic Arabia and how women were given more rights by the coming of Islam. Others included general material about the role and responsibilities of women, which was not the focus of the question and therefore did not score well. The second part of the question, 'while keeping to the teachings of Islam', was not referred to in many of the weaker responses.

Question 3

This question was well answered, and candidates answered it in different ways. Some chose to answer it from the point of view of Muslims living with minority non-Muslims and how they should treat them, for example, giving them freedom to life, education and to practise their religion. Reference was made to the way the Prophet (pbuh) responded to persecution by the Quraish, in Macca, and the Jews, living in Madina when the Prophet (pbuh) became the leader of the new Islamic state. Some candidates also mentioned the caliphate of Umar and his pact with the non-Muslims, giving them rights and protection under Muslim rule.

Others chose to write of Muslims living as a minority in a country and how they should try to integrate in the wider society, be it through education (e.g. attending schools with others) or through the work force. Whatever the approach, if candidates could show interaction between Muslims and non-Muslims their answer was valid.

The best answers showed that these interactions could be limited for numerous reasons, e.g. adherence to Islamic principles (for example in partaking food with non-Muslims because of the presence of haram ingredients, such as alcohol or pork).