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Paper 0493/11
Paper 11

Key messages

- Responses must be written in legible handwriting.
- Question parts must be labelled accurately, especially when extra sheets are used.
- Answers should be written in the designated spaces provided for the chosen question, not at a different place.
- If the answer exceeds the space provided, extra sheets must be used and labelled properly.
- Rubric must be followed strictly; failure to do so may result in loss of marks.
- Candidates must answer all parts of the questions; leaving out even low mark questions can negatively impact the final grade.

General comments

Candidates provided some extremely detailed, accurate and comprehensive responses, with impressive levels of detail shown. The understanding displayed in the **(b)** parts of the questions was particularly strong; the arguments presented were sound and well-reasoned and the examples chosen were precise and highly effective.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

(a) Stronger responses were able to identify multiple themes or underlying ideas from each passage, elaborate on them, and support with relevant quotes from other similar verses. However, many candidates tended to paraphrase the actual translation or provide generic details about the main topic of the selected passage, limiting them to around half of the available marks.

(b) The majority of responses were simple suggestions about Islamic beliefs and practices based on the teachings of the selected passages, such as believing in one God, avoiding association of partners with Him, and offering praise or worshipping Him etc. Many candidates also repeated the themes or teachings, which limited the credit they could achieve. In contrast, stronger responses identified specific themes and discussed how these directly impact the belief and actions of Muslims.

Question 2

(a) Many candidates demonstrated good awareness of the Prophet's meditation habits, his encounter with the Archangel and the support provided by his wife and the Christian scholar.

Those who scored higher marks were able to quote exact excerpts from historical accounts of the incident, including the precise words or dialogues exchanged between the Prophet (pbuh), the Archangel, Khadija and Waraqa.

In contrast, responses lacking in detail, with insufficient depth in points and some inaccuracies received lower marks.

(b) Excellent answers discussed the specific reasons for the sending of an angel at the time of the first revelation. Some of the ideas proposed included the high stakes associated with the initial encounter of the Prophet (pbuh) with the spiritual world, while other, well-considered responses

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suggested that this method helped to avoid the hardships that might arise from alternative ways of receiving revelations. A number of candidates also attributed it to the fact that revelation through an angel carried a higher likelihood of acceptance amongst the people.

Those who focused only on the general significance of angels or their duties could only score mid-range marks.

Question 3

(a) Very strong answers were seen in response to this question, with candidates providing extensive details about the atrocities faced by the early Muslim community. Fuller accounts of the oppression experienced by the poor, slaves and even influential Muslims were given, along with description of the collective persecutions faced by the community.

By contrast, missing details, lack of depth and inaccuracies in other responses led to lower marks.

(b) Candidates who were able to discuss multiple lessons and provide specific examples from the lives of present-day Muslims were able to score higher marks. Responses that offered only simplistic suggestions, such as being patient and steadfast, were limited to two out of four marks available.

Question 4

(a) Stronger candidates attempted both parts of the question, giving detailed accounts of the causes of both battles, the number of forces on each side, description of the battlefields and the aftermath of the conflicts. They also provided specific details about the commanders and other individuals who played significant roles.

Weaker responses either confused these battles with others, attempted only one part of the question or omitted many of the necessary details, resulting in an incomplete account.

(b) Excellent responses were able to highlight the Prophet's immaculate bravery in the face of sudden ambush and loss of life, drawing lessons of determination and unwavering trust in God. Some candidates also emphasised his remarkable forgiveness, with the suggestion that Muslims should strive to emulate this quality. Those who offered only simplistic suggestions, such as being brave or trusting in God, were limited to mid-range marks.

Question 5

(a) Candidates who chose to answer this question generally demonstrated good knowledge of the life of ʿAisha. Well-developed responses followed the chronology of her life events, beginning with her childhood, the migration to Madina, and her marriage to the Prophet (pbuh). The relationship that she developed with the Prophet (pbuh) was highlighted effectively. Significant events such as the allegations made against her and the final days of the Prophet (pbuh) in her compartment were also discussed in detail. In contrast, the candidates who did not score higher marks either missed key events of her life or included details of events that occurred after the demise of the Prophet (pbuh) which were not relevant to the question.

(b) Thoughtful answers placed special emphasis on female education and highlighted the importance of encouraging female leadership particularly in the field of education. These responses were well supported with specific examples from the lives of Muslims living in different parts of the world. In contrast, many candidates responded with basic suggestions about simply obtaining education, which limited the depth of their answers and the marks they could achieve.

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Paper 0493/12
Paper 12

Key messages

- All answers must be written in clear, legible handwriting.
- Spend a few minutes understanding the question's demand and then prepare a brief mind map before answering.
- Each answer must include a clear introduction, well-developed main points, and a concise conclusion.
- In **part (b)** of the questions beginning with 'to what extent…', candidates should start the response by stating their stance clearly, indicating the extent, followed by the arguments to support their stance.

General comments

Candidates must understand the demands of the question before starting their answer. It is essential to select relevant knowledge and present it in a structured format with a clear introduction, main points, and conclusion. Many candidates try to write everything they know about the topic even if the information is not directly relevant to the question.

For **parts (b)** questions, instead of giving simplistic explanations about how Muslims are supposed to behave in every case, answers should directly reflect the specific demands of the question.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

(a) Highly focused responses selected several themes from the passages and presented them in a clear, concise way, supported with relevant quotes from other similar passages. The majority, however, simply paraphrased the sura/verses or delved into unnecessary details about the background of the event. Mid-range answers often lacked precision and specificity, relying heavily on paraphrasing. To improve their answers, candidates must select a few prominent themes and elaborate on what the passage says about them and then support with a few quotes from other sources.

(b) Stronger responses consistently referred to the themes identified in **part (a)** and then explained their practical significance in Islamic belief and practices, and their impact on a Muslim's life today. Thoughtful and precise answers, supported with relevant examples, were able to achieve higher-range marks. In contrast, simplistic suggestions — such as having a strong belief in God, avoiding associating partners with Him, or engaging in meritorious acts for every passage — limited answers to mid-range marks only.

Question 2

(a) Candidates were asked to select any three passages and write about how God describes Himself in those passages. Highly accurate responses were focused, relevant and detailed. Several ideas were explored from each passage, elaborated further, while other answers were supported with references from similar passages of the Quran.

Mid-range responses were able to choose some themes but lacked elaboration and, at times, included information that was not directly relevant. Many candidates however, jumbled together different ideas about God without clearly indicating which passage the description came from. Since only some of the ideas were relevant, these responses tended to achieve only lower-level

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marks. Candidates would benefit from further practice in identifying different themes from the passages and presenting them in essay form. This would ensure they develop a clear understanding of any key themes within the passages but also strengthen essential skills such as selecting relevant information and presenting it in a structured, coherent format.

(b) Some very thoughtful answers were seen in response to this question. These made clear reference to God's descriptions in the passages discussed in **part (a)** and showed how these descriptions help Muslims in their daily lives. Relevant examples were also provided making such responses particularly impactful. However, a large number of candidates gave generic answers, such as Muslims believing in one God, worshipping Him only and avoiding sins. These responses lacked depth and insight and therefore did not achieve higher-level marks.

Question 3

(a) The question required candidates to describe how the Prophet (pbuh) extended the scope of his preaching and, once he started calling Makkans to Islam openly, how they reacted to it. Excellent responses discussed in detail the preaching to Bani Abdul Muttalib and the Safa call, including minute details of how the Prophet (pbuh) was ordered by God, quoting precise verses. Candidates also provided extensive details of the harsh reaction the Prophet (pbuh) faced from the Makkans and briefly referred to the persecutions endured by the early Muslim community.

Some candidates struggled to present a balanced response; too much focus was put on the first few years of private preaching which was not directly relevant to the question. Similarly, some responses discussed what happened to the early Muslim community, which was expected to be covered only briefly, in more detail than was necessary. Other reasons for lower marks included inaccuracies, missing essential details and a lack of development within the points made.

(b) Excellent responses referenced the precise reactions of the Prophet (pbuh), drawing specific lessons from them and then applying these lessons to the lives of Muslims today, often supported with concrete day-to-day examples.

Many candidates however, produced more descriptive answers, focusing on how the Prophet (pbuh) reacted, and concluding only with a brief suggestion to follow his example. Such answers lacked depth and application and therefore could only achieve half the marks available.

Question 4

(a) Candidates adopted two distinct approaches in answering this questions. Some focused on the *Muwakhat* (the brotherhood created by the Prophet (pbuh)) detailing the background, the pairs formed, the support offered by the Ansars, and the great display of self-reliance demonstrated by the Muhajirun. By keeping their focus on the events of the first year of migration, these responses often achieved higher marks. Others, however, broadened the scope of their answers. After talking about the arrival of the Muhajirun, they described how the relationships developed over the years and provided details of co-operation between the two groups during various historical events, such as battles against the enemies of Islam and the sacrifices made by the Ansars at every stage. Both approaches were credited. Highly accurate and detailed responses containing precise information and supported with quotes from authoritative sources achieved higher marks, while the reasons for lower marks included imprecise details, factual inaccuracies and information that was not directly relevant.

(b) The strongest responses demonstrated a clear understanding of the demands of the question. They addressed the extent to which it is possible to develop similar relations to those bonds established between the Ansars and the Muhajirun, and supported their stance with well-reasoned arguments. Such answers, with both clarity and depth, scored higher marks.

Question 5

(a) This was not a popular question with candidates. Those who identified different companions who served as scribes of the Prophet (pbuh), and highlighted their contributions such as memorising the Quran, writing it down, or recording treaties and other documents scored higher marks. Some candidates adopted a different approach, focusing instead on the process of recording the divine revelations while highlighting the roles played by the scribes. Both approaches were credited.

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Many candidates wrongly interpreted the question and discussed the compilation of the Qur'an during the rule of the Caliphs, which was not directly relevant.

Highly accurate and considerably detailed information, supported with precise references, enabled candidates to achieve higher marks. In contrast, inaccuracies, inclusion of irrelevant facts and a lack of depth or detail restricted responses to mid to lower-range marks.

(b) It was pleasing to see many candidates making comparisons between the ease of recording Islamic knowledge today with that of the past. For higher-level marks, candidates were expected to explain the extent to which it is easier now, a requirement that very few were able to meet.

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Paper 0493/21
Paper 21

Key messages

Overall, candidates performed well on this examination. There is clear evidence of year-on-year improvement in both knowledge and understanding of the subject. It is important when answering **Question 1** that candidates make a clear distinction between teaching and implementation of the teachings. It was seen in the responses to **part (b)** of **Question 1** that misplaced attention was given to the importance of the teaching from **part (a)**, rather than how Muslims can act upon the specific teachings given in **part (a)**.

General comments

Candidates should be encouraged to tailor their responses to the specific requirements of each question, rather than relying on pre-prepared answers for the topic being examined.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

(a) All four Hadiths appeared to be within the candidates' scope, and none posed any particular difficulty. However, when explaining the teachings of Hadith 4, it is important that candidates highlight its twofold message: the need to fulfil one's obligations and the importance of being aware of what is lawful and unlawful in Islam to avoid what is forbidden.

Hadiths 16 and 2 both address care within the community and the ummah. To achieve higher marks, candidates needed to distinguish clearly between the different aspects of the teachings in each Hadith, rather than offering general comments on brotherhood.

(b) Candidates needed to again recognise and articulate the subtle differences between the teachings of Hadiths 16 and 2 to demonstrate a deeper understanding. Additionally, as noted above, **part (b)** responses should explain how Muslims can put the teachings of the selected Hadiths into practice, rather than discussing the importance of the chosen Hadith in general. This distinction, particularly in comparison with the **part (b)** answers for **Question 1** in Paper 1, must be kept clearly in mind.

Question 2

(a) This question was reasonably well-attempted. To achieve higher marks candidates needed to explain more specifically how knowledge of the Prophet's Hadiths and adherence to his Sunnah enable Muslims to obey God. Stronger responses could have included examples from different aspects of the Prophet's life to illustrate how Hadiths support understanding and practising of one's faith. Relevant examples could have included observance of the Pillars, the role of Hadith in the formulation of sharia law, and how *ijma* and *qiyas* are based on the Prophet's teachings. Candidates could also have referred to his guidance on family life, supported by appropriate examples and quotations, and discussed how Muslims are commanded by God to follow the Prophet.

Simply stating that following the Hadiths is beneficial or improves one's life was not sufficient for top marks; responses needed to provide depth, explanation, and well-chosen examples.

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(b) Stronger responses explained how following the Hadiths benefits Muslims, with their points supported by appropriate examples. To do this, candidates could have referred to examples such as the Hadith encouraging kindness towards orphans; in the contemporary context, where many children are orphaned due to war and conflict, caring for them not only provides vital support but also enables individuals to earn God's reward. Any suitable Hadith could have been selected, with its benefits for both the individual and the community clearly brought out. Well-developed answers successfully adopted this approach.

Question 3

(a) This question required a two-part response: candidates needed first to describe the election process through which ʿUthman became the third caliph, and then to outline his administrative policies. Knowledge of the election process given in responses was not always accurate, and some candidates mistakenly attributed some of ʿUmar's administrative policies to ʿUthman. Overall, the second part of responses tended to be stronger than the first.

(b) This was a 'To what extent' question, requiring candidates to evaluate ʿUthman's success as a military commander and provide balanced reasoning. Candidates could have argued for his success by referring to his suppression of the early rebellions following his election, his establishment of the first Muslim naval force, or his role in expanding the Muslim empire. Conversely, they could have suggested that his inability to quell the later rebellion that ultimately led to his martyrdom indicates that he was a more effective administrator than a military leader.

To reach the highest marks, responses needed to present a well-supported and balanced discussion, clearly addressing the extent to which ʿUthman could be considered a successful military commander.

Question 4

(a) This was a popular and well-answered question. Candidates provided detailed and accurate accounts of the compilation of the Qur'an during both Abu Bakr's and ʿUthman's caliphates. Details of the process of compilation itself, with an account of why there was a need felt both times to compile the Qur'an, alongside supporting quotes, enabled candidates to reach top-level marks.

(b) Candidates were expected to explain the benefits of the written Qur'an both during the caliphates of Abu Bakr and ʿUthman and for present-day Muslims. Many candidates focused on only one period, suggesting a misunderstanding of the requirements of the question.

Part (b) questions encourage critical thinking, and candidates may benefit from developing confidence in expressing their views. Classroom discussions could help achieve this, enabling candidates to tackle similar questions effectively in examination conditions, while enhancing their analytical and critical thinking skills.

Question 5

(a) This was a question focussed on the method and importance of ablution. Marks were awarded holistically rather than being equally divided between the two parts. Some candidates provided more detail on the method of performing ablution, while others focused more on its importance.

To achieve higher marks, candidates needed to have combined both aspects effectively: clearly describing the step-by-step procedure of ablution, while also explaining its spiritual and practical significance, such as purification before prayer, fostering mindfulness of God, and promoting hygiene. References to relevant Hadiths or Qur'anic injunctions could have further strengthened their response.

(b) The question specifically asked for the benefits of dry ablution (*tayammum*), rather than the procedure for performing it. Many candidates focused on describing the process itself, and therefore did not fully address the question as set.

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To gain higher marks, candidates needed to explain the purpose and advantages of *tayammum*, such as allowing Muslims to maintain spiritual cleanliness when water is unavailable or when illness prevents the use of water and enabling the performance of prayers without hardship. They could also have highlighted its role in demonstrating obedience to God's commands and the flexibility within Islamic law to accommodate human needs. Clear examples or references to Qur'anic guidance would have strengthened responses further.

Conclusion

As said above, candidates are getting stronger and this is reflected in the answers they gave.

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Paper 0493/22
Paper 22

Key messages

Many candidate responses showed an insufficient understanding of what the questions required. This series, the quality of answers was disappointing, perhaps due to inadequate preparation or a failure to grasp the specific demands of the questions.

General comments

In this series, it appeared that many candidates did not perform as well as expected across all three optional questions. A significant number of those attempting **Question 3** and **4** did not engage with the specific demands of the questions. For **Question 3**, many relied on pre-prepared answers rather than addressing the precise focus required. For **Question 4**, candidates often overlooked the emphasis on *Ali's leadership qualities*, instead providing responses more appropriate for a Paper 1 question on *Ali's life during the lifetime of the Prophet (pbuh)*.

Question 5, which asked about three elements of Hajj, was generally straightforward, yet a notable proportion of candidates were unable to define the required terms, leading to weaker overall performance.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

(a) Of the four Hadiths on the paper, Hadith 7 was the least attempted. Many candidates restricted its teaching to armed jihad alone, whereas the Hadith conveys a broader message, emphasising engagement in God's service through one's person, property, and wealth, and the continual effort to establish a pious and just society.

Hadith 6, although a popular choice, was often misunderstood. Many candidates interpreted it as a personal instruction to avoid committing evil, rather than the intended teaching: to actively prevent evil when witnessing it by all means possible. Understanding this central message was essential. Hadiths 11 and 15 were more straightforward, and the candidates who selected them generally performed well.

(b) Candidates were expected to focus on how the teachings of the selected Hadith could be implemented in a Muslim's life, rather than discussing the importance of the teaching. It is in Paper 1, **Question 1 part (b)** that candidates are required to reflect on the importance of the passages chosen in **part (a)**. Candidates need to understand this distinction and respond appropriately, as the two types of **part (b)** questions assess different skills: application in Paper 2 and evaluative understanding in Paper 1.

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Question 2

(a) In this compulsory question, candidates were expected to identify and accurately describe the four sources of Islamic law: Qur'an, Sunnah, Ijma' and Qiyas. They also needed to explain how each source is applied in legal reasoning and law-making, demonstrating an understanding of the hierarchy between the primary sources and the secondary sources. Appropriate examples were required to support their explanations.

Candidates could have referred to how the Qur'an and Sunnah work together, particularly in matters of worship and issues of *halal* and *haram*. For instance, the Qur'an commands believers to perform *salat*, while the detailed method of performing this obligation is provided in the Hadith of the Prophet (pbuh).

Other suitable examples – such as rulings on theft, inheritance laws, and similar areas – would also have strengthened responses. In addition, candidates needed to show how the secondary sources derive their authority from the Qur'an and the laws established by the Prophet (pbuh).

It was not sufficient to merely describe the four sources; candidates were required to demonstrate how Islamic laws are formulated from these sources to show a fuller understanding of Islamic legal methodology.

(b) The focus of this answer needed to be on why the Prophet (pbuh) permitted the use of *qiyas*. However, many candidates simply repeated what they had written in **part (a)**, explaining the meaning of *qiyas* and how it is applied, rather than addressing the specific requirement of the question. It is essential that students read the question carefully and respond directly to what is being asked.

Part (b) questions are designed to assess a candidate's understanding, not merely their knowledge. This distinction between the expectations of **part (a)** and **part (b)** must be clearly understood and consistently reinforced.

Question 3

(a) This was a two-part question requiring candidates to explain how the lives of ordinary people improved during ʿUmar's caliphate as a result of the administrative policies he introduced. However, many candidates simply listed his administrative reforms without describing their impact on the population, which was the central focus of the question.

Stronger responses adopted a clear structure by either outlining each administrative measure followed by its effect, or by integrating policy and impact within the same point. Candidates must be guided to tailor their responses to the precise requirements of the question rather than relying on descriptive recall.

(b) Candidates needed to demonstrate their understanding of the effects of ʿUmar's military successes on the lives of people, not their knowledge of individual battles. Nevertheless, some candidates provided brief accounts of military campaigns, which did not address the demands of the question.

Effective responses highlighted that military victories brought substantial wealth into the caliphate, enabling improvements to infrastructure, enhancing living standards, and providing for the needs of the population. Additionally, these successes strengthened the confidence of the Muslim community and contributed to a greater sense of security.

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Question 4

(a) This question asked candidates to discuss the leadership qualities of the fourth caliph, ʿAli. However, a significant number of responses provided narrative accounts of events such as the Battle of Khaybar, focusing on his bravery prior to his caliphate. Such material could not be fully credited, as the development of this quality, bravery, was not drawn from the period of his caliphate as defined in the question. The life of ʿAli as a Blessed Companion, and all his achievements up to the death of the Prophet (pbuh), form part of the Paper 1 syllabus, whereas in Paper 2 the focus is on ʿAli's life as the fourth caliph.

Marks were awarded not only for identifying a relevant leadership quality but also for developing it with accurate and appropriate examples from ʿAli's caliphate. Where candidates named a suitable quality but illustrated it with examples from earlier in his life, the development could not be credited.

(b) Candidates were expected to give a clear opinion on which quality they considered the most outstanding and support their choice with examples and reasoned arguments showing their understanding of 'Ali's character and how the chosen quality stood out among the others.

If they gave his love of the Prophet (pbuh) and referred to his acceptance of Islam at a young age, or his willingness to act as a decoy at the time of the Prophet's migration it was seen as valid reasoning. His knowledge also could have been selected as his most outstanding quality supported with quotes to strengthen the answer.

Question 5

(a) Well-developed responses needed to identify the three essential elements of the annual pilgrimage and explain their significance. While some candidates were able to name the elements, many were unable to provide their importance, which was a key requirement of the question. A number of candidates also demonstrated confusion by mixing up the rites—for example, associating *rami* with ʿArafat or *sa'i* with *ṭawaf*.

This was not a popular question, and the responses seen suggested a general lack of knowledge and insufficient preparation for this topic.

(b) This part asked about the importance of offering sacrifice, for both the pilgrims performing Hajj and Muslims worldwide. Many candidates repeated the story of Ibrahim, which they had already used in explaining the rite of *rami*, and did not link their answers to the importance of the act.

More creditable responses referred to the significance of the sacrifice in fulfilling a key obligation of Hajj, its role in expressing obedience and gratitude to God, and its wider importance for Muslims who perform the sacrifice globally. Overall, however, the question was not well answered, as many candidates struggled to move beyond narrative retelling and were unable to articulate the underlying importance required.

Conclusion

Performance of candidates this series was not as strong as seen in the past years.

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