CAMBRIDGE
International Education

Cambridge IGCSE™

FIRST LANGUAGE CHINESE **0509/21**

Paper 2 Writing **May/June 2026**

MARK SCHEME

Maximum Mark: 50

Published

This mark scheme contains the instructions and marking guidance that our examiners used to mark candidate responses for this component.

Before they start marking, examiners complete a standardisation process. They review a range of candidate responses and discuss the mark scheme in detail to agree which answers can and cannot be accepted. Examiners award marks where it is clear that candidate responses have met the requirements of the mark scheme. These requirements may vary between different components or different versions of the same component, depending on the exact requirements of the question and the candidate responses seen during the standardisation process.

Sometimes, our mark schemes may allow marks to be awarded to responses which contain elements that are factually incorrect or for content not covered by the syllabus. We do this in response to the demands of a specific question to support candidates and make sure that our assessments are fair. However, these allowances should not be used as a guide for teaching and learning.

We cannot discuss the mark scheme with schools, and we recommend that schools read the mark scheme together with the assessment material and the Principal Examiner Report for Teachers.

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[Turn over

General marking principles

All examiners must apply these marking principles when marking candidate responses.

1	Examiners must award marks for each response in line with: • the specific **content** defined in the mark scheme • the specific **skills** defined in the mark scheme or in the level descriptions • the **standard of response** required as exemplified by the standardisation scripts.
2	Examiners must award **whole marks** (not half marks, or other fractions).
3	Examiners must award marks **positively**. This means that: • marks are not deducted for errors or omissions • marks are awarded for correct/valid answers as defined in the mark scheme and also for **other valid answers** which go beyond the scope of the syllabus and mark scheme referring to your team leader as appropriate • the quality of spelling, punctuation and grammar are judged **only** when the mark scheme indicates that these features are **specifically assessed** in the question. However, the meaning of all responses must be unambiguous.
4	Examiners must **consistently** apply the requirements of the mark scheme and any rules for what to do when candidates have not followed instructions correctly.
5	Examiners must use the **full range of marks** defined in the mark scheme, unless limited by the quality of the candidate responses seen.
6	Examiners must award marks according to the mark scheme and **must not** award marks with grade thresholds or grade descriptions in mind.

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Annotations guidance for centres

Examiners use a system of annotations as a shorthand for communicating their marking decisions to one another. Examiners are trained during the standardisation process on how and when to use annotations. The purpose of annotations is to inform the standardisation and monitoring processes and guide the supervising examiners when they are checking the work of examiners within their team. The meaning of annotations and how they are used is specific to each component and is understood by all examiners who mark the component.

We publish annotations in our mark schemes to help centres understand the annotations they may see on copies of scripts. Note that there may not be a direct correlation between the number of annotations on a script and the mark awarded. Similarly, the use of an annotation may not be an indication of the quality of the response.

The annotations listed below were available to examiners marking this component in this series.

Annotations

Annotation	Meaning
	Correct: credit for content point or good language
	Incorrect
	Grammatical, spelling or punctuation error
	Meaning unclear or illegible
	Omission (of letter, character, word, etc.)
	Irrelevant
	Irrelevant (Chinese)
	Contradiction
	Relevant detail
	Development of point or idea
	Evaluation
	Repetition
	Use to show that blank pages have been seen and any creditworthy material has been awarded
	Inappropriate use of vocabulary from another language
Highlighter	Highlight

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Annotation	Meaning
Off-page comment	Used to make a holistic comment about the script

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Marking Instructions

Irrelevant answers

The following guidance is intended to clarify how to mark answers if they bear no relevance to the question(s) asked. Please contact your Principal Examiner (or Product Manager for Single Examiners) if you are in any way unsure how to mark a response.

- First check if any of the response has some connection with another question on the paper.
- Look for any parts of the response that could be a plausible response to the question set, and reward the language there. It is likely that the resulting mark will be very low.
- Use the vertical wavy line + IR annotation in the margin to indicate irrelevant material and do not award Language marks for these parts of the answer.
- **Content**: zero is a valid mark if the answer bears no relation at all to any of the questions asked on the paper.
  'No creditable content' is in the zero descriptor. For a mark of 1–2 they have to have a few discernible points. If their points do not address the question in any way then they cannot be considered to be discernible points.
- **Language**: apply an approach of only rewarding language within parts of the answer that are in response to the question set.
  If there are really no parts of the answer that could be considered to be an attempt to respond to the question, then zero would be the mark.
- 1–2 marks: 'basic vocabulary' – if there is very little to mark that is relevant to the question, this will suit.
- 3–4 marks: 'a few supporting facts, ideas, opinions.' May be appropriate if there is more relevant material than would justify a 1–2 mark.

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Candidates will be awarded marks in two categories for the composition that they write:

- the first mark is out of 12 for Style and Accuracy: see Table A;
- the second mark is out of 13 for Content and Structure: see Table B1, B2, B3 or B4 (depending on the type of composition: Argumentative, Discursive, Descriptive or Narrative).

Candidates will be assessed on their ability to:

AO2 Writing
W1: communicate clearly, effectively and imaginatively
W2: synthesise information, sequence facts and develop ideas and opinions
W3: use a range of appropriate vocabulary
W4: use tone, style and register appropriate to audience and context
W5: write characters correctly and make accurate use of characters, punctuation and grammar

TABLE A – STYLE AND ACCURACY

Level 6	**11–12**	**Fluent and easy to understand** The candidate: • uses a variety of well-constructed sentences, including complex sentences where appropriate, to achieve particular effects • uses extensive vocabulary which is well-chosen, precise and at times ambitious. Is able to use sophisticated expressions, for example, appropriate use of idioms • writes in a consistent, appropriate register and tone throughout • is able to use characters accurately and is consistently secure in the use of punctuation and grammar, even in more complex sentences or passages.
Level 5	**9–10**	**Fluent and comprehensible** The candidate: • uses a variety of sentence structures correctly, including complex ones • uses vocabulary and expressions which are varied and often effective, and sometimes ambitious • almost always writes in a consistent and appropriate register and tone • is nearly always accurate in the use of characters, punctuation and grammar.
Level 4	**7–8**	**Mostly fluent with occasional minor lapses in clarity** The candidate: • uses sentence structures correctly, sometimes attempting complex ones with success • uses appropriate and accurate vocabulary; choice of vocabulary communicates precise meaning only occasionally • is not always consistent in the use of register and tone although this does not detract from the message • uses simple grammatical forms correctly. Sentence separation is mostly correct. Occasional mistakes in the use of characters – but no error of any sort impedes communication.

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Level 3	**5–6**	**Sometimes fluent, sometimes unclear** The candidate: • uses simple sentence structures that may be repetitive. Complex sentence structures are attempted with only limited success • uses vocabulary which communicates general meaning, but is sometimes limited and repetitive • shows some awareness of an appropriate register and tone, but sometimes makes lapses which detract from the message • makes some errors of punctuation including sentence separation; makes some character and grammatical errors, rarely serious enough to prevent understanding.
Level 2	**3–4**	**Much of the response is difficult to understand although there may be occasional clear sections** The candidate: • uses simple sentence structures, sometimes inaccurately. Complex sentences are not attempted, or if they are, they are repeatedly joined by 'and', 'but' and 'so', with other conjunctions being used ineffectively, if at all • uses basic vocabulary, sometimes inaccurately • uses an inappropriate register and tone in most of the response • makes frequent errors of character use, punctuation and grammar which prevent understanding to some extent, but the overall meaning is not in doubt.
Level 1	**1–2**	**The response is difficult to understand** The candidate: • uses poorly constructed sentences • uses basic vocabulary, often inaccurately • shows no awareness of appropriate register and tone • makes persistent errors of character use, punctuation and grammar which make much of the response difficult to understand.
	0	• No creditable content.

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TABLE B1 – Argumentative

An argumentative essay attempts to clearly present a strong position on a particular topic. Its purpose is to both educate and persuade the reader on a particular point of view. It may target an audience that is more resistant to its viewpoint or message.

Level 6	**11–13**	• Fulfils the task with a consistently good sense of purpose and audience. • The argument is very focused, sometimes sophisticated and consistently persuasive, and supported by a wide range of relevant facts, ideas and opinions. The opposing viewpoint may be described and refuted to convince the reader that the argument being presented is correct. • Every stage of the argument is developed and linked in a logical way. Sentences within paragraphs are well-sequenced.
Level 5	**9–10**	• Fulfils the task with a good sense of purpose and audience. • The argument is clearly presented and almost always persuasive, supported by relevant facts, ideas and opinions. • Nearly all stages of the argument are developed and linked in a logical way. Paragraphs are mostly well sequenced, although some may be uneven in quality.
Level 4	**7–8**	• Fulfils the task, attempting to address the topic, but with lapses of focus and/or awareness of audience. • The argument is coherent and supported by facts, ideas or opinions of some relevance, developed in a straightforward manner. • Stages of the argument are generally linked together in a logical way. The sequence of the sentences within paragraphs is satisfactory, although some ideas may not be linked.
Level 3	**5–6**	• Some engagement with the task. Generally insufficient awareness of purpose and/or audience. • The argument is generally sound, though sometimes repetitive. It is supported by facts, ideas or opinions of limited relevance, which are developed in a straightforward manner. • Some stages of the argument are linked together in a logical way. The response may be uneven overall, starting more strongly than it finishes, or vice versa.
Level 2	**3–4**	• Very limited engagement with task, little sense of purpose and/or audience. • The argument is often unclear. A few supporting facts, ideas or opinions are given, but these are not developed. • There is a lack of overall sequencing. Paragraphs, if used, are not clearly linked together.
Level 1	**1–2**	• No engagement with the task, or engagement with task is hidden by density of error. • The argument is difficult to follow and there is little attempt to develop supporting facts, ideas or opinions. • Few ideas in the text overall are linked. The sequence of sentences is poor.
	0	• A mark of zero should be awarded where material is irrelevant.

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TABLE B2 – Discursive

The goal of a discursive essay is to present a balanced and objective examination of a subject. It does not, however, have to be expressly neutral. The essay should present both sides of the discussion.

Level 6	**11–13**	• Fulfils the task with a consistently good sense of purpose and audience. • The discussion is balanced, sometimes sophisticated and showing full awareness of both sides of the issue being discussed. It is consistently supported by a wide range of relevant facts, ideas and opinions. • Every stage of the discussion is developed and linked in a logical way. Sentences within paragraphs are well-sequenced.
Level 5	**9–10**	• Fulfils the task with a good sense of purpose and audience. • The discussion is clearly presented and almost always developed in a balanced way, supported by relevant facts, ideas and opinions. • Nearly all stages of the discussion are developed and linked in a logical way. Paragraphs are mostly well sequenced, although some may be uneven in quality.
Level 4	**7–8**	• Fulfils the task, attempting to address the topic, but with lapses of focus and/or awareness of audience. • The discussion is coherent and supported by facts, ideas or opinions of some relevance, developed in a straightforward manner, showing some awareness of both sides of the issue under discussion. • Stages of the discussion are generally linked together in a logical way. The sequence of the sentences within paragraphs is satisfactory, although some ideas may not be linked.
Level 3	**5–6**	• Some engagement with the task. Generally insufficient awareness of purpose and/or audience. • The discussion is generally sound, though sometimes repetitive and is heavily biased towards one viewpoint. It is supported by facts, ideas or opinions of limited relevance, which are developed in a straightforward manner. • Some stages of the discussion are linked together in a logical way. The response may be uneven overall, starting more strongly than it finishes, or vice versa.
Level 2	**3–4**	• Very limited engagement with task, little sense of purpose and/or audience. • The discussion is often unclear. A few supporting facts, ideas or opinions are given, but these are not developed. There is no acknowledgment or development of the opposing viewpoint of the issue under discussion. • There is a lack of overall sequencing. Paragraphs, if used, are not clearly linked together.
Level 1	**1–2**	• No engagement with the task, or engagement with task is hidden by density of error. • The discussion is difficult to follow and there is little attempt to develop supporting facts, ideas or opinions. • Few ideas in the text overall are linked. The sequence of sentences is poor.
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TABLE B3 – Descriptive

Level 6	**11–13**	• The response consistently presents relevant well-defined, well-developed ideas and images. • A vivid sense of atmosphere is created, with sensory details used to engage the reader fully. • The structure is secure and coherent. Devices such as the movements of the writer, the creation of a short time span or the creation of atmosphere or tension are used.
Level 5	**9–10**	• The response presents a variety of engaging and relevant ideas and images, with a range of details. • A strong sense of atmosphere is created, with some sensory detail, engaging the reader's attention. • The structure is clear and largely consistent. There may be occasional missed details. Sentences are well sequenced and the description is effective.
Level 4	**7–8**	• The response presents effective ideas and images that are relevant to the topic and which satisfactorily address the task. • Some feeling of atmosphere is created and some details are provided which interest the reader. • The response contains a series of points. Some of the ideas are developed, though straightforwardly. Some sentences are well sequenced. There may be a lack of an effective overall picture.
Level 3	**5–6**	• The response presents some relevant details, ideas or images, occasionally developed in a straightforward way. • An attempt is made to create atmosphere and limited details are provided. The response may be more narrative (focused on events) than descriptive. • There is some overall structure but the writing may lack direction and intent. There may be interruptions in the sequence of sentences and/or some lack of clarity or repetition.
Level 2	**3–4**	• The response shows an attempt to present some relevant details, ideas or images. • Where there is any development, it is very simple. The response may be more narrative than descriptive. • There is limited attention to sequencing and structure, lack of progression and/or repetition.
Level 1	**1–2**	• The response presents few relevant descriptive details, ideas or images. • Development is minimal or non-existent. • A few sentences may be sequenced but overall the order of ideas is confused and there may be significant repetition.
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TALE B4 – Narrative

Level 6	**11–13**	• The narrative consistently engages the reader and uses a wide range of imaginative ideas, images and narrative devices successfully. • Characterisation and/or setting are fully convincing. • The different sections of the story are carefully balanced and the climax is carefully managed. • Sentence sequences are sometimes arranged to produce effects such as the building up of tension or providing a sudden turn of events.
Level 5	**9–10**	• The narrative is almost always engaging to the reader and uses some features that are of interest to a reader, although not consistently so. • Character and/or setting are portrayed with some attempt at creativity. • The story is orderly and the beginning and ending (where required) are well managed. The reader is aware of the climax even if it is not managed completely effectively. • The sequencing of sentences provides clarity and engages the reader in events.
Level 4	**7–8**	• The narrative is straightforward, with satisfactory identification of features such as character and setting. There may be an attempt to use narrative devices, although these may be of limited success. • Character and/or setting are clearly, if simply, portrayed. • While opportunities for appropriate development of ideas are sometimes missed, the overall structure presents the narrative effectively. • Sentences are usually sequenced to narrate events.
Level 3	**5–6**	• The narrative is relevant but contains few, if any, narrative devices. • There is some attempt to portray character(s) and/or setting. • The overall structure is sound although there are examples where a particular section is too long or too short. A climax may be identified but is not effectively described or led up to. • Sentence sequences narrate events but may occasionally contain intrusive facts or misleading ideas.
Level 2	**3–4**	• The narrative is simple and generally unengaging, making limited use of ideas or images. • Details of character and setting are limited. • While some events in the story are narrated in a logical sequence, others may be unconnected and without a resolution. • Sentence sequences are only used to link a simple series of events. • Inappropriate importance may be given to sections of the story.
Level 1	**1–2**	• The narrative is very simple and unengaging. • There is little or no attempt to define character and/or setting. • The story is difficult to follow because the structure is unclear and events in the story are generally muddled and unconnected. Some of the content has no relevance to the plot.
	0	A mark of zero should be awarded where material is irrelevant.

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