



Cambridge O Level

PHYSICS

5054/32

Paper 3 Practical Test

May/June 2026

MARK SCHEME

Maximum Mark: 40

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.

This document consists of **12** printed pages.

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.

Science-Specific Marking Principles

1	Examiners should consider the context and scientific use of any keywords when awarding marks. Although keywords may be present, marks should not be awarded if the keywords are used incorrectly.
2	The examiner should not choose between contradictory statements given in the same question part, and credit should not be awarded for any correct statement that is contradicted within the same question part. Wrong science that is irrelevant to the question should be ignored.
3	Although spellings do not have to be correct, spellings of syllabus terms must allow for clear and unambiguous separation from other syllabus terms with which they may be confused (e.g. ethane / ethene, glucagon / glycogen, refraction / reflection).
4	The error carried forward (ecf) principle should be applied, where appropriate. If an incorrect answer is subsequently used in a scientifically correct way, the candidate should be awarded these subsequent marking points. Further guidance will be included in the mark scheme where necessary and any exceptions to this general principle will be noted.
5	<u>'List rule' guidance</u> For questions that require <i>n</i> responses (e.g. State two reasons ...): • The response should be read as continuous prose, even when numbered answer spaces are provided. • Any response marked <i>ignore</i> in the mark scheme should not count towards <i>n</i>. • Incorrect responses should not be awarded credit but will still count towards <i>n</i>. • Read the entire response to check for any responses that contradict those that would otherwise be credited. Credit should not be awarded for any responses that are contradicted within the rest of the response. Where two responses contradict one another, this should be treated as a single incorrect response. • Non-contradictory responses after the first <i>n</i> responses may be ignored even if they include incorrect science.

6 Calculation specific guidance

Correct answers to calculations should be given full credit even if there is no working or incorrect working, **unless** the question states 'show your working'.

For questions in which the number of significant figures required is not stated, credit should be awarded for correct answers when rounded by the examiner to the number of significant figures given in the mark scheme. This may not apply to measured values.

For answers given in standard form (e.g. $a \times 10^n$) in which the convention of restricting the value of the coefficient (a) to a value between 1 and 10 is not followed, credit may still be awarded if the answer can be converted to the answer given in the mark scheme.

Unless a separate mark is given for a unit, a missing or incorrect unit will normally mean that the final calculation mark is not awarded. Exceptions to this general principle will be noted in the mark scheme.

7 Guidance for chemical equations

Multiples / fractions of coefficients used in chemical equations are acceptable unless stated otherwise in the mark scheme.

State symbols given in an equation should be ignored unless asked for in the question or stated otherwise in the mark scheme.

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 used by examiners marking this component in this series.

Annotations

Annotation	Meaning
	information missing or insufficient for credit
	used to highlight parts of an extended response
	evaluation attempted
	benefit of the doubt given
	contradiction in response, mark not awarded
	incorrect point or mark not awarded
	error carried forward applied
	incorrect or insufficient point ignored while marking the rest of the response
	two statements are linked
	mandatory mark not awarded
	benefit of doubt was considered, but the response was decided to not be sufficiently close for benefit of doubt to be applied.

Annotation	Meaning
POT	power of ten error
SEEN	point has been noted, but no credit has been given or blank page seen
SF	error in number of significant figures
TV	response is too vague or there is insufficient detail in response
	correct point or mark awarded
U	Incorrect unit

Mark Scheme Abbreviations:

;	separates marking points
/	alternative responses for the same marking point
R	reject the response
A	accept the response
I	ignore the response
ecf	error carried forward
AVP	any valid point
ora	or reverse argument
AW	alternative wording
<u>underline</u>	actual word given must be used by candidate (grammatical variants excepted)
()	the word / phrase in brackets is not required but sets the context
max	indicates the maximum number of marks that can be given
mp	marking point
cao	Correct answer only

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Question	Answer	Marks	Guidance
1(a)(i)	$t = 23.0 \text{ (s)} - 25.0 \text{ (s)}$ inclusive	1	accuracy mark, > 2 significant figures
1(a)(ii)	candidate's 1(a)(i) $\div 20$	1	correctly rounded, any significant figures > 1
1(b)	$t > \mathbf{1(a)(i)}$ and T correct	1	1 rounding and significant figures
1(c)	doubling l does not double T / T/l is not constant, <u>shown</u> by using data from the table	1	some processing of data required
1(d)(i)	value correct for their results	1	1 significant figures and rounding
	g_1 to 2 significant figures	1	any value to 2 significant figures
1(d)(ii)	g_2 calculated	1	1 significant figures and rounding
1(e)	values used in a calculation (to justify the following statement)	1	e.g., values used to show that the difference between the values is < 10% of either, or the ratio of the values is ≥ 0.9 (90%); not % difference from mean for this mark a correct calculation, but an incorrect statement can get this mark
	statement matches results and calculation	1	must match calculation; allow this mark if % difference calculated from mean if both values are identical then the statement 'the values are the same' scores both marks, without the need for a calculation
1(f)	rule placed close to pendulum (when measuring the length) / perpendicular viewing of the rule or parallax described / start counting from zero / use of a fiducial aid / ruler perpendicular to bench	1	A repeat <u>and</u> average

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Question	Answer	Marks	Guidance
2(a)(i)	$\theta_0 > 60\text{ }^{\circ}\text{C}$ and recorded to nearest 0.5°	1	
2(a)(ii)	θ_{240} recorded and $< \theta_0$	1	
2(b)(i)	both temperature values recorded	1	
	$\Delta\theta$ for beaker Q $< \Delta\theta$ for beaker P	1	A $\Delta\theta$ same for both beakers
2(b)(ii)	s, $^{\circ}\text{C}$, $^{\circ}\text{C}$	1	allow $^{\circ}\text{C}$ seen once not C or C° A seconds, but not sec(s)
2(c)	both answers correct using data from Table 2.1	1	A 1 significant figure
2(d)	comparative statement matching the temperature differences obtained	1	
	reference to greater / smaller temperature difference <u>in the same time</u>	1	allow calculation of rates
2(e)	any one from: volume of water initial temperature room temperature time of cooling size / thickness / material of beaker	1	I comments about air conditioning
2(f)	remove the lid (from Q) / add a lid to P (and repeat the experiment)	1	A remove the lid from the other beaker

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Question	Answer	Marks	Guidance
3(a)	power supply, ammeter, switch in series with the gap	1	A symbols for cells / battery P and Q need not be labelled allow a resistor drawn in the gap do not accept any extra symbols
	voltmeter in parallel with power supply/gap	1	do not accept line through meters
3(b)	$V < 4.5$ (V) and to at least 1 decimal place	1	check SV
	$I < 1.0$ (A) and to at least 2 decimal places	1	
3(c)	complete set of values for V and I	1	consistent decimal places in each column
	V increases as I decreases	1	allow one discontinuity
3(d)	axes labelled, quantity and unit	1	reversed axes withhold this mark only x-axis scale must start from 0
	scales linear, not awkward	1	(must fill at least half the grid), no $\times 3$, $\times 7$ etc.
	points plotted accurately, to the nearest $\frac{1}{2}$ square	1	not 'blobs' $> \frac{1}{2}$ square diameter
	thin best-fit straight line drawn	1	annotate the graph vertically with ticks/crosses in mark scheme order
3(e)	values indicated on graph, $\geq \frac{1}{2}$ the line <u>between the extreme plotted points</u> used	1	e.g. triangle drawn / coordinates of chosen points indicated
	correct substitution and G calculated	1	I missing negative sign any significant figures > 1 I unit
3(f)	$r = G $ and recorded to the nearest ohm	1	correctly rounded ecf 3(e)

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Question	Answer	Marks	Guidance
3(g)	(very) high current flows / cells damaged / ammeter damaged / wires get very hot / insulation melts / battery heats up / circuit overheats	1	I causes a short circuit / damages circuit components / causes electrocution / causes sparks

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Question	Answer	Marks	Guidance
4	additional apparatus: MP1 stopwatch (and measuring cylinder)	1	can be awarded from a diagram
	method: MP2 (set the fan speed and) measure the initial temperature, final temperature and the time taken for the hot water to cool	1	
	MP3 repeat for different fan speeds / settings	1	
	control variables: one of: MP4 initial temperature of the hot water mass / volume / amount of hot water beaker material / size room temperature distance of the beaker from the fan	1	all control variables must be stated explicitly and not implied from the method used
	table: MP5 columns to include fan speed / setting, initial temperature, final temperature and time with correct units	1	A plausible symbols instead of words e.g. t , T , θ , θ_1 , θ_2 I any units given for fan speed A C and C° and sec(s) here, as these incorrect units have already been penalised in 2(b)(ii) and also mins / m if previously used and penalised I extra columns
	MP6 processing and conclusion: one of: plot a graph/bar chart of fan speed against rate of cooling plot a graph/bar chart of fan speed against temperature (decrease) plot a graph of temperature against time (for each fan speed) OR compare the readings in the table to see if/how/whether the fan speed affects the (rate of) cooling	1	I a prediction e.g., the faster the air speed, the faster the rate of cooling etc. A a set of labelled axes drawn - no units needed