

Cambridge International AS Level

ENGLISH GENERAL PAPER**8021/11**

Paper 1 Essay

May/June 2026**MARK SCHEME**Maximum Mark: 30

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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 **18** 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.

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
	Demonstrates an understanding of the question and is used to indicate: - a focused introduction. - each new valid point made in relation to the key words of the question.
	Further development of a valid point in the question or development of evaluation. [This may precede or follow a tick, according to the candidate's argumentative method.]
	Use of relevant example.
	Generalised and descriptive points.
	Assertion. Opinions stated without any credible evidence.
	Repetition of point.
	When the candidate has not answered the question, or a section of the response is not answering the question.
	Vague points and ideas.
	Evaluation is attempted.

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Annotation	Meaning
	Examples of ambitious, sophisticated accurate expression, punctuation and grammatical structures.
	Serious errors that impede communication and for where register becomes informal or inappropriate.

Generic levels of response descriptions

These level definitions address Assessment Objectives (AOs) 1, 2 and 3, and should be used in conjunction with the indicative content for each question in the mark scheme. Information about AOs can be found in the Cambridge International AS Level English General Paper syllabus (8021) for examination in 2019, 2020 and 2021.

Introduction

The level definitions which follow reflect, and should be interpreted within the context of, the following general statement:

- (a) Examiners will give their highest marks to candidates who demonstrate a disciplined management of the discussion the question provokes and use clear and accurate communication. Examiners will be guided more by careful selection and application of information, effective analysis and evaluation, and supported judgement, than by weight of facts.
- (b) Examiners will use these level definitions in combination with the question-specific mark schemes.
- (c) Explanation or judgement is strengthened if informed by the use of relevant examples.
- (d) The level in which an essay is placed depends on the range of criteria detailed in AO1, AO2 and AO3. As a result, not all essays fall obviously into one particular level. In such cases a 'best-fit' approach will be adopted with any doubt erring on the side of generosity.

In marking an essay, examiners will first place it in a level and then fine-tune the mark in terms of how strongly/weakly the demands of the level have been demonstrated. The criteria in each level are written to exemplify the middle of that level.

Levels of response descriptions				
Level	AO1 Selection and application of information	AO2 Analysis and evaluation	AO3 Communication using written English	Marks
5	- Selects a range of fully relevant information that effectively exemplifies the main aspects of the response to the question. - Applies a range of examples appropriately to support the main ideas and opinions in the response.	- Analyses possible meanings of the question and defines the scope of the response. - Develops, analyses and evaluates a range of arguments to reach a supported conclusion. - Develops a strong argument with clear use of supportive evidence.	- Communicates clearly with consistently appropriate use of register. - Uses a wide range of vocabulary and a variety of language features. - Uses language with control and accuracy. Errors, if present, are only related to the use of sophisticated words and structures. - Constructs a cohesive response which links ideas, arguments and paragraphs convincingly. Text is well organised.	25–30
4	- Selects relevant information that exemplifies the main aspects of the response to the question. - Applies examples appropriately to support the main ideas and opinions in the response.	- Analyses the meaning of the question to inform the scope of the response. - Develops, analyses and begins to evaluate different arguments to reach a supported conclusion. - Develops a well-reasoned argument with use of supportive evidence.	- Communicates clearly with appropriate use of register. - Uses a range of vocabulary and language features. - Uses language with control and some accuracy. Errors relate to the use of less common words and structures. - Constructs a clear response which links ideas, arguments and paragraphs. Text is generally well organised.	19–24

Levels of response descriptions				
Level	AO1 Selection and application of information	AO2 Analysis and evaluation	AO3 Communication using written English	Marks
3	- Selects information that exemplifies some of the main aspects of the response to the question. - Applies examples to support the main ideas and opinions in the response.	- Demonstrates understanding of the meaning of the question in the response. - Develops and brings together some arguments to form a conclusion. - Constructs an argument which is logical and usually supported by evidence.	- Communicates clearly overall but with inconsistent use of appropriate register. - Uses everyday vocabulary and some varied language features. - Uses language with some control. Errors are noticeable but do not impede communication. - Constructs a mostly coherent response which links ideas, arguments and paragraphs. Text has some organisation but may not be sustained.	13–18
2	- Selects limited information that exemplifies aspects of the response to the question. - Applies examples that are linked to some of the ideas and opinions in the response.	- Demonstrates partial understanding of the meaning of the question in the response. - Refers to arguments to form a conclusion. - Constructs an argument partially supported by evidence.	- Communicates clearly in places, with inconsistent use of register. - Uses basic vocabulary with limited language features. - Uses language with limited control. Errors are frequent and sometimes impede communication. - Constructs a fragmented response which links some ideas and/or arguments.	7–12

Levels of response descriptions				
Level	AO1 Selection and application of information	AO2 Analysis and evaluation	AO3 Communication using written English	Marks
1	- Selects limited information that is relevant to the question. - Makes examples which may not link to the ideas and opinions in the response.	- Makes a limited response to the question. - Makes some form of basic conclusion. - Constructs a weak argument.	- Communicates with lack of clarity and/or register is inappropriate. - Uses basic vocabulary. - Uses language with control rarely. Errors are frequent and communication is often lost. - Constructs a response but the response is not organised and ideas are not linked.	1–6
0	A mark of zero should be awarded for no creditable content.			0

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Question	Answer	Marks
1	No country is totally independent. To what extent do you agree with this claim? Answers are likely to: • assess what makes a country independent • examine the factors that prevent a country from being fully independent of others • make a judgement, based on the consideration of the evidence and argument put forward. Answers might include discussions and examples such as: • global trade networks meaning that countries rely on imports and export for goods and services • environmental challenges transcend national boundaries requiring global cooperation and action • international organisations and treaties requiring countries to act together rather than alone • global financial markets being more powerful than any individual state • countries preserving their cultural identities, heritage and ways of life • those countries that depend upon financial aid in order to be viable • the diminishing role of international law in safeguarding smaller nations • those countries that have engaged in struggles for independence in order to be free.	30

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Question	Answer	Marks
2	Schools have a responsibility to encourage young people to do more sport. Discuss. Answers are likely to: • assess the importance of sport for young people • explore the role of schools in encouraging young people to do more sport • make a judgement, based on the consideration of the evidence and argument put forward. Answers might include discussions and examples such as: • schools preparing young people for the rest of their lives, so encouraging healthy lifestyles is partly their responsibility • schools having teachers and equipment/facilities not available to children outside school • sports involving teamwork, leadership, competition and cooperation, allowing young people to develop and enhance their 'soft skills' • some students having a talent for a particular sport which would otherwise go undiscovered • exercise helping to boost energy and concentration levels, enhancing performance in other lessons • not all children being good at sport, leading to potential self-esteem issues • schools having other teaching priorities and demands on their time and resources • parents and wider society having a greater role to play in improving provision and participation.	30

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Question	Answer	Marks
3	Taking a holiday in a different country has very few benefits. To what extent do you agree? Answers are likely to: • assess the reasons for taking a holiday in a different country • explore the benefits and the limitations of taking a holiday in a different country • make a judgement, based on the consideration of the evidence and argument put forward. Answers might include discussions and examples such as: • encountering people, places and experiences that enable discovery, exploration and adventure • having the opportunity to become immersed in new cultures and societies first-hand • the economic and social benefits for those countries being visited • the potential for character building, making memories, and becoming more independent • travel costs making many journeys and visits to places out of reach for some people • apprehension surrounding illnesses and the variable level of medical care available • concerns about crime, security, and personal safety in different parts of the world • taking a holiday in the traveler's own country might bring as much enjoyment.	30

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Question	Answer	Marks
4	There are no good reasons to lower the voting age in <u>your</u> country. Evaluate this view. Answers will be focused on one country with which the candidate identifies or to which they direct their answers. Answers are likely to: • assess the current voting arrangements in their chosen country • explore the likely advantages and disadvantages of lowering the voting age • make a judgement, based on the consideration of the evidence and argument put forward. Answers might include discussions and examples such as: • many young people in the digital age being politically aware and actively supporting various causes • lowering the voting age increasing young people's engagement with politics • younger people having a vote as they have a stake in the decisions made by the government • many older people not voting or doing so without being well informed • voter turnout tending to be lower among younger groups so uptake may be minimal • young voters, lacking maturity and experience, being more easily swayed by one cause or personality • a lack of citizenship or civics education meaning young people may not be well informed enough to vote • younger people not having any political input if not yet contributing to the economy.	30

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Question	Answer	Marks
5	Animals should be free to live in the wild rather than be locked up in a zoo. Discuss. Answers are likely to: • assess the issues raised by keeping animals confined in zoos • explore the implications of animals living freely in the wild • make a judgement, based on the consideration of the evidence and argument put forward. Answers might include discussions and examples such as: • there being many educational benefits of keeping animals in captivity • zoos offering protection from poaching, illegal trading, and hunting for sport • studies and observations in zoos contributing to science and supporting medical research • zoos offering a safe, humane sanctuary for animals that might otherwise become extinct • the inadequate facilities of some zoos having a profound effect on the physical and mental well-being of animals • wild animals not being pets and should remain in their own natural surroundings • zoos preventing animals from behaving naturally due to the restrictions and confines that they are placed in • many zoos not having the conservation skills or experienced staff to save and protect species.	30

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Question	Answer	Marks
6	Language is the most important feature of a person's identity. To what extent do you agree with this view? Answers are likely to: • explore ways in which language is the most important feature of a person's identity • discuss the other features that form a person's identity • make a judgement, based on the consideration of the evidence and argument put forward. Answers might include discussions and examples such as: • language being the primary medium for an individual to express thoughts, feelings and experiences • language influencing cognitive development and thought processes, contributing to how individuals interact with the world • identity being multifaceted and influenced by a range of other factors • language being a key component of cultural heritage carrying traditions and values • speaking a native or ancestral language potentially being an important part of identity • language acquisition being the most important feature of child development • the relationship between language and identity relating to social status • language helping marginalised groups assert their rights and integrate themselves into society.	30

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Question	Answer	Marks
7	Music without lyrics can never be meaningful. Discuss this view. Answers are likely to: • assess the factors that contribute to making music meaningful • explore how the use of lyrics contributes to music's appeal and meaning • make a judgement, based on the consideration of the evidence and argument put forward. Answers might include discussions and examples such as: • lyrics being needed to communicate a specific emotional storyline to a song • some musical genres depending upon words being used for their meaning • certain songs having a cultural and social significance due to the lyrics rather than the music • lyrics encouraging the listener to appreciate language and its effects • the importance of personal interpretation in deriving enjoyment and meaning • dance music evoking emotions and feelings without the need for words • music without words engaging the imagination and the intellect of both listener and performer • soundtracks without lyrics having their own cultural and social significance.	30

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Question	Answer	Marks
8	Most humans will live to be more than 100 years old in the future. To what extent is this situation desirable? Answers are likely to: • explore the benefits of living to over 100 years old • assess the possible problems caused by people living for over 100 years • make a judgement, based on the consideration of the evidence and argument put forward. Answers might include discussions and examples such as: • medical advances increasing longevity and enhancing the quality of life for older people • opportunities for multiple careers in a person's life being more likely • increased regulatory standards having made life safer in various contexts • the experience and wisdom of older people being beneficial in many circumstances • younger generations feeling marginalised as older people continue to hold positions of influence • the psychological impact of extending lifespans being overwhelmingly negative for people • environmental sustainability being challenged by a larger and older population • costs to the state rising to unsustainable levels as people live longer.	30

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Question	Answer	Marks
9	Journalism has become a dangerous profession. Evaluate this statement. Answers are likely to: • assess the role of journalism in today's world • explore the extent to which journalism has become more dangerous today • make a judgement, based on the consideration of the evidence and argument put forward. Answers might include discussions and examples such as: • pressures having grown on reporters and editors with the rise of authoritarian governments • the growth of internet intimidation even in democratic countries causing dangers • there being risks not only to journalists but also to those who talk to them • undercover journalism being dangerous but necessary to expose criminality and corruption • journalists being vilified by people in power and the general public just for doing their job • some journalistic roles not being dangerous such as in sports, fashion and lifestyle • those journalists having a thirst for adventure and the adrenalin rush satisfied by working in dangerous situations • journalism as a profession also being dangerous in the past.	30

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Question	Answer	Marks
10	It is realistic to believe that the world's environmental problems can be solved. To what extent do you agree? Answers are likely to: • examine some of the environmental problems being faced by the world • assess the ways in which the world's environmental problems might be solved and whether these are realistic • make a judgement, based on consideration of the evidence and arguments put forward. Answers might include discussions and examples such as: • there being a number of successful local and international initiatives to limit environmental problems • increasing public awareness of environmental issues enabling both group and individual actions to be successful • the impact of actions being taken by businesses in addressing environmental problems • green energy creating new opportunities and supporting a thriving economy • scientific discoveries and developments having a huge impact on the environment • the extent to which political and economic forces are impacting the environment • environmental challenges being so significant that complete solutions may be unattainable • the impact of natural environmental disasters can be limited but not entirely prevented.	30