

Cambridge International AS Level

ENGLISH GENERAL PAPER**8021/12**

Paper 1 Essay

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

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 **17** 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.

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

Levels of response descriptions				
Level	AO1 Selection and application of information	AO2 Analysis and evaluation	AO3 Communication using written English	Marks
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
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

Levels of response descriptions				
Level	AO1 Selection and application of information	AO2 Analysis and evaluation	AO3 Communication using written English	Marks
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
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

PUBLISHED

Question	Answer	Marks
1	Wealthy nations should always provide assistance to developing countries. Discuss this view. Answers are likely to: • examine why developed countries should offer assistance to developing countries • explore the negative impacts of always providing assistance to developing countries • make a judgement, based on the consideration of the evidence and argument put forward. Answers might include discussions and examples such as: • corruption in developing countries hindering assistance from reaching its intended recipients • developed countries having their own local issues that require funding • consistently providing assistance leading to dependency, hindering economic development • giving assistance being morally right for humanity to help each other in times of need • countries seeking assistance from developed nations following a natural disaster • there being varied ways to assist the development of a country • assistance can be used as a tool for political and economic influence leading to exploitation • encouraging multinational corporations to invest in developing countries and generate opportunities.	30

PUBLISHED

Question	Answer	Marks
2	Reading and telling stories to young children is very important. Examine this statement. Answers are likely to: • examine the reasons why reading and telling stories to young children is important • explore the negatives of reading and telling stories to young children • make a judgement, based on a consideration of the evidence and argument put forward. Answers might include discussions and examples such as: • it can be a routine, reading a story at bedtime, without any background noise, having a calming effect on children • other creative activities can be prompted by the telling or reading of stories • reading stories can improve language skills, improve memory and trigger the imagination • there is bonding between the reader and the child as they share the stories • the possible danger of children losing the initiative to read for themselves • varied environments where reading to children are important include schools, hospitals and libraries • watching videos of stories is more interesting as there is the visual aspect • children are inspired to make up their own stories which they tell to themselves or others.	30

PUBLISHED

Question	Answer	Marks
3	Possessing nuclear weapons is the best way for a country to avoid war. Evaluate this statement. Answers are likely to: • consider the issues that arise with possessing nuclear weapons • discuss alternative measures which might result in war being avoided • make a judgement, based on the consideration of the evidence and argument put forward. Answers might include discussions and examples such as: • opposing sides knowing that a nuclear strike would be the end of the world as we know it • economic sanctions being an effective way of curbing the aggression of opponents • both sides being prepared to compromise on political, religious, and cultural differences • nuclear weapons not guaranteeing safety due to the activities of rogue groups and terrorism • lack of support for governments from citizens fearing catastrophic destruction • the cost of nuclear weapons creating a financial burden in addition to concerns about their safe storage • making the assumption that countries who possess nuclear weapons have a fail-safe system that avoids their use • the existence of countries without nuclear weapons that have no history of involvement in conflict	30

PUBLISHED

Question	Answer	Marks
4	A painting does not capture life as successfully as a photograph. Discuss. Answers are likely to: • consider the key differences between paintings and photographs • discuss the extent to which both forms successfully capture life • make a judgement, based on the consideration of the evidence and argument put forward. Answers might include discussions and examples such as: • paintings being subjective and are an artist's view of their subject • the tools and techniques used vary allowing for a wide interpretation of the subject • the ability to be able to add or remove features that need emphasis or are less attractive • the subject having the chance to be placed anywhere chosen by the artist which may be imaginary • photographs precisely capturing a single instant, a unique moment in time • wide accessibility of cameras allow people to document life's events with ease or spontaneity • being able to distort reality with the use of filters and photoshop, modifying the moment • the instantaneous nature of photography compared to the long time spent producing a painting.	30

PUBLISHED

Question	Answer	Marks
5	The only purpose of education is to obtain good qualifications. Evaluate this claim. Answers are likely to: • consider the importance of obtaining good qualifications in education and what they may be • discuss alternative purposes of education • make a judgement, based on the consideration of the evidence and argument put forward. Answers might include discussions and examples such as: • qualifications proving an individual's competence in particular subject matter and skills • qualifications being a measurable and reliable way of assessing relative performance • the role of good qualifications in further education and the job market • the provision of basic education and functional skills as a right • the possible over-emphasis and reliance on the importance of exam-based qualifications • the development of essential life and soft skills for later life • education facilitating the necessary skills for and interest in life-long learning • education as a tool for increased equality of opportunity and social mobility.	30

PUBLISHED

Question	Answer	Marks
6	‘The role of men in bringing up children is essential in modern society.’ Discuss. Answers are likely to: • show some understanding of the reasons why men may have a role in bringing up children in modern society • show some understanding of the changes in modern society • make a judgement , based on a consideration of the evidence and argument put forward Answers might include discussions and examples such as: • more women are becoming educated and entering the work force • due to the cost of living, two incomes are required to maintain payment of bills • men need to do their share of looking after their children • if parents separate, the father needs to keep in contact with their children • through changes in education and culture, men are more willing to be involved in bringing up their children and becoming role models • in some cultures, men do not approve of women working and believe that she should stay at home • some children grow up without a father figure which may lead to issues in later life • other male role models including male family members and teachers.	30

PUBLISHED

Question	Answer	Marks
7	‘The effects of natural disasters have become more severe due to human activity.’ To what extent do you agree? Answers are likely to: • define ‘natural’ disasters and identify a range of unfortunate human interventions • consider the likely magnitude of effects without human intervention • make a judgement, based on the consideration of the evidence and argument put forward Answers might include discussions and examples such as: • natural cycles of global temperature change leading to sea level rise in human settlements • the increase in extreme weather events due to human-induced greenhouse gas emissions • deforestation increasing the severity of landslides and floods • urbanisation in high-risk areas leading to higher human and economic cost during natural disasters • destruction of natural coastal defences increase severity of tsunamis and hurricanes • forest fires can be part of the natural regenerative process, although careless human activity can preempt this • natural geological cycles cause disasters that are independent of human activity • human innovation in infrastructure and engineering has made effects of disasters less severe in many regions	30

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Question	Answer	Marks
8	‘Scientific research intended to benefit human health should not face any restrictions.’ Discuss. Answers are likely to: • consider the benefits to human life expectancy and quality of life from continued research into disease, ageing and other health-related areas • understand and analyse the benefits of continued research into improving human health • make a judgement, based on a consideration of the evidence and argument put forward. Answers might include discussions and examples such as: • cultural and ethical objections to particular methods of scientific research, and concerns regarding unknown longer-term effects of such processes • potential benefits to humans individually and communally as well as contagious disease/epidemics • potential negatives for population growth and ageing populations with associated costs and impact on retirement age • less controversial developments such as improvements in diagnosis, medication and treatment, which are more likely to be encouraged without restriction • possible misuse of technology by wealthy individuals and/or governments • restrictions on medical research that involve animal or unethical testing methods • funding priorities so that resources are directed to areas with greatest potential impact or medical need • the role of regulatory agencies to impose safety and efficacy standards	30

PUBLISHED

Question	Answer	Marks
9	Advertising has a very negative impact on society. Evaluate this view. Answers are likely to: • assess the negative impacts of advertising • examine the positive impacts advertising may have on society • make a judgement, based on the consideration of the evidence and argument put forward. Answers might include discussions and examples such as: • advertising encouraging excessive materialism, fuelling desire for new products and services leading to waste • advertising frequently reinforcing harmful stereotypes relating to race and gender • beauty advertising promoting narrow standards of beauty potentially impacting self esteem • the targeting of vulnerable or easily influenced groups in society with manipulative tactics • the rise of digital advertising leading to concerns over privacy and data exploitation • the advertising industry being creative innovative, entertaining and an art form • advertising revenue supporting many different forms of entertainment and charitable causes • the advertising industry being an important part of many industries employing many people.	30

PUBLISHED

Question	Answer	Marks
10	Artificial intelligence is changing people's lives for the better. To what extent do you agree? Answers are likely to: • consider ways that artificial intelligence is becoming a part of people's lives • discuss the extent to which artificial intelligence may have a better or adverse effect on people's lives • make a judgement, based on the consideration of the evidence and argument put forward. Answers might include discussions and examples such as: • automating repetitive, time-consuming tasks and reducing human error • making the diagnosis and treatment of medical conditions more immediate and accurate • personalizing learning and acting as a 'research assistant' that rapidly gathers information • allowing people to easily create music, videos and artwork of quality • AI translation allows people from different cultures to communicate and collaborate instantly • the reduction in employment opportunities as well as redundancies • AI-generated 'deepfakes' and automated bots can spread convincing misinformation at scale • data required to train AI involves tracking personal habits and movements, raising concerns about surveillance and loss of privacy.	30