

Cambridge International AS Level

ENGLISH GENERAL PAPER**8021/13**

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	Advertisements for unhealthy food and drinks should be banned. Discuss this view. Answers are likely to: • examine the benefits of banning advertisements for unhealthy food and drinks • assess the possible drawbacks of banning advertisements for unhealthy food and drinks • make a judgement, based on the consideration of the evidence and argument put forward. Answers might include discussions and examples such as: • advertisements depicting unhealthy food and drinks' consumption as a form of entertainment • banning advertising for unhealthy food and drinks helping to reduce obesity • some advertisements targeting children, leading them to demand more unhealthy food and drinks • small and medium-sized businesses suffering as revenue from unhealthy food and drinks' sales decline • the advertising industry facing a range of challenges as revenues decline • regulating advertising potentially restricting the target audience of such advertisements • the influence of advertising bans changing consumer behaviours is not always effective • consumers having the freedom to choose what they eat and drink.	30

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Question	Answer	Marks
2	Assess the view that it is easier to write non-fiction than fiction. Answers are likely to: • assess and compare different aspects of both genres • explore how one genre may seem relatively easier to write than the other • make a judgement, based on a consideration of the evidence and argument put forward. Answers might include discussions and examples such as: • non-fiction being concerned with the real world rather than an imagined one • both forms demanding specific expertise and an awareness of audience • those contexts where the distinction between the genres is not always obvious • some non-fiction being easier to write because material can be accessed from various sources • fiction writing requiring a fertile imagination and originality in order to make an impact • non-fiction writers facing serious consequences if they get their facts wrong • fiction writers having to make dialogue realistic and true to their characters • both forms of writing being seen as possessing a range of artistic qualities.	30

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Question	Answer	Marks
3	Politicians have become poor role models. To what extent do you agree? Answers are likely to: • discuss what a good role model might be • assess in what ways politicians might be perceived as poor role models • make a judgement, based on the consideration of the evidence and argument put forward. Answers might include discussions and examples such as: • some politicians acting in ways that might be considered negatively by others • politicians, because of how they behave, being seen as good role models • more scrutiny of politicians making it difficult for them to have private lives • their independence of thought and action being dependent on political pressures • those politicians putting their lives at risk for the sake of others • public perception of politicians being too easily influenced by prejudice • civic engagement being encouraged by politicians in different parts of the world • those politicians that inspire young people to be politically involved.	30

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Question	Answer	Marks
4	Gene editing can <u>only</u> be beneficial to humanity. Discuss this view. Answers are likely to: • explore what gene editing might accomplish • assess the benefits and drawbacks of gene editing for humanity • make a judgement, based on the consideration of the evidence and argument put forward. Answers might include discussions and examples such as: • scientific innovation never being deterred in the interests of progress • human traits that are valued being enhanced for the benefit of society • genetic diseases being effectively eradicated in different areas of the world • improved health of the population reducing the medical costs incurred on governments and other providers • fashion and fads dictating the particular genes selected and preferred • only benefitting those people who can afford such medical interventions • gene editing perpetuating inequalities that already exist in developing parts of the world • gene editing distorting the fair and necessary allocation of resources across the medical field.	30

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Question	Answer	Marks
5	To what extent does a good education system make a country successful? Answers are likely to: • explore what a good education is • assess the extent to which education can make a country successful • make a judgement, based on the consideration of the evidence and argument put forward. Answers might include discussion and examples such as: • the role of education in raising living standards and contributing to development • the socialising function of education and its importance as a conduit for socially acceptable behaviour • improvements in knowledge and skills elevating the whole of society • education bringing improvements in vital life skills that help people to live better lives • other areas of life such as health and employment being just as important as education • depending on the curriculum, compulsory education narrowing rather than broadening understanding • education giving people qualifications but more is needed for a country to be successful • the differing approaches of various educational systems around the world.	30

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Question	Answer	Marks
6	Large business corporations are a threat to global security. Discuss this view. Answers are likely to: • explore the activities and influence of large corporations • assess how global security might be affected by the activities of large business corporations • make a judgement, based on the consideration of the evidence and argument put forward. Answers might include discussions and examples such as: • funding from the wealth of corporations being used for development assistance across the world • corporations creating jobs for an increasing number of individuals improving stability • their investment strategies encouraging great innovation and advancements in technology • their sponsoring of cultural and sporting events enabling participation and enjoyment • large business corporations damaging the environment due to a variety of activities • political influence and power undermining governmental independence and individual rights • those emerging economies whose people do not benefit from big corporations • control of content information giving media outlets and platforms excessive influence.	30

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Question	Answer	Marks
7	Evaluate the importance of marriage in today's world. Answers are likely to: • assess the importance of marriage in today's world • explore the alternatives to marriage in relationships and families • make a judgement, based on the consideration of the evidence and argument put forward Answers might include discussions and examples such as: • marriage being important for the stability of individuals and societies • there being more ways than marriage to express commitment and love • there being a range of attitudes and practices related to marriage in cultures and societies across the world • the availability of divorce testing the durability of marriage as an institution • the influence of religious belief being a factor in how marriage is regarded • how we relate to one another being more important than any marital contract • marriage becoming less popular because of other priorities in life • the extent to which children are benefitting from their parents being married.	30

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Question	Answer	Marks
8	Email is an inadequate method of communication. Discuss. Answers are likely to: • evaluate the various positive qualities of e-mail compared to other forms of communication • explore the inadequacies of e-mail and the strengths and weaknesses of other methods of communication • make a judgement, based on the consideration of the evidence and argument put forward. Answers might include discussions and examples such as: • sending e-mails being easy and immediate, requiring little training or formality • there being no need for stationery, postage costs or a postal infrastructure • e-mail requiring the user to be connected to the internet • items being easily attached which might otherwise require expensive copying • other forms of new communication making e-mail obsolete such as video calling • there being a lack of personal qualities and contact between correspondents • handwritten mail being more personal with e-mail lacking feeling, tone, and a sense of register • problems relating to the etiquette of using email as well as the many cases of a lack of reply.	30

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Question	Answer	Marks
9	Evaluate the extent to which international cooperation is vital for ensuring that everyone has access to clean water. Answers are likely to: • discuss the variations in the availability of water in different regions of the world • assess the role of international cooperation in ensuring all people have access to clean water • make a judgement, based on the consideration of the evidence and argument put forward. Answers might include discussions and examples such as: • the impact of establishing agreements for managing water supplies and water between countries • the implementation of conservation programmes to protect and ensure water supply • support and planning is essential as overpopulation in many countries is leading to water shortages • nutrition and healthy living being at risk without a secure, clean water supply • income disparity causing issues of water security for countries and individuals • ensuring water chains are disease-free secures the health of living creatures • governance and policy-making being the key to providing clean water for all • the monitoring of infrastructure to ensure fewer water leaks and possible contamination from industry.	30

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Question	Answer	Marks
10	Music is created purely for pleasure and has no intended meaning for its listeners. Discuss. Answers are likely to: • assess the pleasurable and entertaining aspects of music • analyse how and why we attach meaning to music • make a judgement based on the consideration of the evidence and argument put forward. Answers might include discussions and examples such as: • music often being written to express an idea or convey a message • words or lyrics expressing those feelings and emotions recognised by the listener • instrumental music having an appeal beyond precise or fixed meaning • how we respond to music without knowing what the composer's intentions were • music accompanying ceremonies of various kinds often having shared and purposeful meanings • those environments where hearing music is imposed rather than chosen • experiencing music at a live event compared to listening to recorded music • the role of education in fostering and shaping musical appreciation and listening habits.	