CAMBRIDGE
International Education

Cambridge O Level

ENGLISH LANGUAGE **1123/21**

Paper 2 Writing **October/November 2025**

MARK SCHEME

Maximum Mark: 50

Published

This mark scheme is published as an aid to teachers and candidates, to indicate the requirements of the examination. It shows the basis on which Examiners were instructed to award marks. It does not indicate the details of the discussions that took place at an Examiners' meeting before marking began, which would have considered the acceptability of alternative answers.

Mark schemes should be read in conjunction with the question paper and the Principal Examiner Report for Teachers.

Cambridge International will not enter into discussions about these mark schemes.

Cambridge International is publishing the mark schemes for the October/November 2025 series for most Cambridge IGCSE, Cambridge International A and AS Level components, and some Cambridge O Level components.

This document consists of **13** printed pages.

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Generic Marking Principles

These general marking principles must be applied by all examiners when marking candidate answers. They should be applied alongside the specific content of the mark scheme or generic level descriptions for a question. Each question paper and mark scheme will also comply with these marking principles.

GENERIC MARKING PRINCIPLE 1:

Marks must be awarded in line with:

- the specific content of the mark scheme or the generic level descriptors for the question
- the specific skills defined in the mark scheme or in the generic level descriptors for the question
- the standard of response required by a candidate as exemplified by the standardisation scripts.

GENERIC MARKING PRINCIPLE 2:

Marks awarded are always **whole marks** (not half marks, or other fractions).

GENERIC MARKING PRINCIPLE 3:

Marks must be awarded **positively**:

- marks are awarded for correct/valid answers, as defined in the mark scheme. However, credit is given for valid answers which go beyond the scope of the syllabus and mark scheme, referring to your Team Leader as appropriate
- marks are awarded when candidates clearly demonstrate what they know and can do
- marks are not deducted for errors
- marks are not deducted for omissions
- answers should only be judged on the quality of spelling, punctuation and grammar when these features are specifically assessed by the question as indicated by the mark scheme. The meaning, however, should be unambiguous.

GENERIC MARKING PRINCIPLE 4:

Rules must be applied consistently, e.g. in situations where candidates have not followed instructions or in the application of generic level descriptors.

GENERIC MARKING PRINCIPLE 5:

Marks should be awarded using the full range of marks defined in the mark scheme for the question (however; the use of the full mark range may be limited according to the quality of the candidate responses seen).

GENERIC MARKING PRINCIPLE 6:

Marks awarded are based solely on the requirements as defined in the mark scheme. Marks should not be awarded with grade thresholds or grade descriptors in mind.

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English & Media subject specific general marking principles
(To be read in conjunction with the Generic Marking Principles (and requiring further guidance on how to place marks within levels))

Components using level descriptors:

- We use level descriptors as a guide to broad understanding of the qualities normally expected of, or typical of, work in a level.
- Level descriptors are a means of general guidance and should not be interpreted as hurdle statements.
- Where indicative content notes are supplied for a question, these are *not* a prescription of required content, and must not be treated as such. Alternative correct points and unexpected answers in candidates' scripts must be given marks that fairly reflect the knowledge and skills demonstrated.
- While we may have legitimate expectations as to the ground most answers may occupy, we must at all times be prepared to meet candidates on their chosen ground, provided it is relevant ground (e.g. clearly related to and derived from a relevant passage/text and meeting the mark scheme requirements for the question).

Components using point-based marking:

Point marking is often used to reward knowledge, understanding and application of skills. We give credit where the candidate's answer shows relevant knowledge, understanding and application of skills in answering the question. We do not give credit where the answer shows confusion.

From this it follows that we:

a DO credit answers which are worded differently from the mark scheme if they clearly convey the same meaning (unless the mark scheme requires a specific term).

b DO credit alternative answers/examples which are not written in the mark scheme if they are correct.

c DO credit answers where candidates give more than one correct answer in one prompt/numbered/scaffolded space where extended writing is required rather than list-type answers. For example, questions that require *n* reasons (e.g. State two reasons…).

d DO NOT credit answers simply for using a 'key term' unless that is all that is required. (Check for evidence it is understood and not used incorrectly.)

e DO NOT credit answers which are obviously self-contradicting or trying to cover all possibilities.

f DO NOT give further credit for what is effectively repetition of a correct point already credited unless the language itself is being tested. This applies equally to 'mirror statements' (i.e. polluted/not polluted).

g DO NOT require spellings to be correct, unless this is part of the test. However, spellings of syllabus terms must allow for clear and unambiguous separation from other syllabus terms with which they may be confused (e.g. Corrasion/Corrosion).

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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
✓ 1	Indicates ideas selected from Text A (Section A)
✓ 2	Indicates ideas selected from Text B (Section A)
EVAL	Indicates evaluation of an idea (Section A)
DEV	Indicates development of an idea (Section A)
V	Indicates merits of vocabulary (including spelling)
P	Indicates merits of punctuation
F	Indicates purposeful/effective use of descriptive/narrative and structural features
L5 L4 L3 L2 L1	Indicates level of achievement (use of sentence structures and grammar)

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Section A: Directed Writing

Question 1

This question tests the following reading assessment objectives (10 marks)

R3 analyse, evaluate and develop facts, ideas and opinions, using appropriate support from the text
R5 select and use information for specific purposes.

and the following writing assessment objectives (15 marks)

W1 articulate experience and express what is thought, felt and imagined
W2 organise and structure ideas and opinions for deliberate effect
W3 use a range of vocabulary and sentence structures appropriate to context
W4 use register appropriate to context
W5 make accurate use of spelling, punctuation and grammar.

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Question	Answer	Marks
1	Your school has recently received some money to spend on improving either the sports hall or the library. You have read some of the opinions posted on the school noticeboard. Your principal has asked you to write a report, giving your views. Write a **report** for your school principal. In your report you should: • evaluate the ideas and opinions in **both** texts • give your own views about whether the money should be spent on improving the sports hall or the library, based on what you have read in the texts. Base your report on what you have read in **both** texts but be careful to use your own words. Address both of the bullet points. Begin your report with 'To: The Principal'. Remember to give your name and a date. Write about **250** to **350** words. **Up to 10 marks are available for the content of your answer and up to 15 marks for the quality of your writing.** **Notes on task:** **Responses should be based on some or all of the following ideas:** **Text A–in favour of sports hall development** • provide safe and comfortable place / current sports hall is dangerous • good for students' mental health / ability to study • host sports competitions and events • improve the school's **reputation** / better image for school • improve school's **relationship** with (whole) community **Text B–in favour of library development** • access to **up-to-date** materials/information • help students develop research skills • provide chance to find new interests / learn things beyond those taught in the classroom • put on events // e.g. book clubs and author visits • improve **links** with the local community **Credit any wording in candidate response which captures the idea; it does not need to be expressed in the wording of the texts or of the MS.**	**25**

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Question	Answer	Marks
1	**Evaluation** is offering judgement of an idea. Anything which suggests prioritization of one idea over another, or dismissal of an idea, is valid as evaluation. Also look out for: • the use of rhetorical questions which may be **evaluative** • tone which implies **evaluation** • emotive vocabulary which implies **evaluation** **Development** is adding an example or information additional to an idea already in the text, e.g. a viable alternative, personal experience, etc. whereas evaluation is about offering a judgement of the quality or validity of that idea. It is also possible that we will see development of evaluation. Candidates may also decide to evaluate the actual texts – as well as, or instead of, the ideas and opinions within them – by considering the following aspects: • how **sensible** / **convincing** the argument is • evidence of **bias** in the texts • how well supported the argument is (with **evidence**) • consideration of **others' viewpoints** • use of **language**	

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Marking criteria for Section A, Question 1

Section A: Reading Table

Use the following table to give a mark out of 10 for reading.

Level	Marks	Description
5	9–10	• Selects a wide range of relevant facts, ideas and opinions from the text(s). (R5) • Analyses, evaluates and develops the chosen content in a way that clearly fulfils all elements of the task. (R3)
4	7–8	• Selects a range of relevant facts, ideas and opinions from the text(s). (R5) • Some analysis, evaluation and development and a clear focus on the task. (R3)
3	5–6	• Identifies sufficient relevant facts, ideas and opinions from the text(s). (R5) • Some development of ideas in a reasonably focused response. (R3)
2	3–4	• Identifies some relevant points from the text(s). (R5) • Occasional development of ideas in a response that is sometimes focused. (R3)
1	1–2	• Attempts to identify a few relevant points from the text(s). (R5) • Evidence of some focus on the task. (R3)
0	0	• No creditable content.

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Section A: Writing Table

Use the following table to give a mark out of 15 for writing.

Level	Marks	Description
5	13–15	• Content is complex, well developed and effective. (W1) • Well-organised structure that assimilates ideas from the text(s). (W2) • Uses a wide range of well-constructed sentences accurately, including complex sentences. (W3) • Precise and effective use of a wide range of vocabulary. (W3) • Consistently appropriate tone and register for audience and purpose. (W4) • Highly accurate use of complex spelling, punctuation and grammar. (W5)
4	10–12	• Content is developed and effective. (W1) • Secure organisation that combines ideas from the text(s). (W2) • Uses a range of sentence structures accurately, including some complex ones. (W3) • Effective use of a range of vocabulary. (W3) • Mostly appropriate tone and register for audience and purpose. (W4) • Accurate use of spelling, punctuation and grammar, including some complex language. (W5)
3	7–9	• Content is relevant with some development. (W1) • Some attempt to organise and structure ideas from the text(s). (W2) • Uses most sentence structures accurately, sometimes attempting complex ones with success. (W3) • Uses a straightforward range of appropriate vocabulary. (W3) • Some awareness of an appropriate tone and register for audience and purpose. (W4) • Uses a straightforward range of spelling, punctuation and grammar. (W5)
2	4–6	• Content is straightforward with occasional development. (W1) • Occasional attempt to organise and structure ideas from the text(s). (W2) • Uses simple sentence structures accurately which may be repetitive. (W3) • Uses a range of simple vocabulary which may be repetitive. (W3) • A little awareness of appropriate tone or register. (W4) • Generally accurate use of more simple spelling, punctuation and grammar. (W5)
1	1–3	• Content is simple with a little development of ideas. (W1) • Organisation and structure rely largely on sequence in original text(s). (W2) • Attempts to use simple sentence structures. (W3) • Uses some simple vocabulary accurately. (W3) • Limited awareness of appropriate tone or register (W4) • Some accuracy in simple spelling, punctuation and grammar. (W5)
0	0	• No creditable content.

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Section B: Composition

Questions 2, 3, 4 or 5

This question tests the following writing assessment objectives (25 marks)

W1 articulate experience and express what is thought, felt and imagined
W2 organise and structure ideas and opinions for deliberate effect
W3 use a range of vocabulary and sentence structures appropriate to context
W5 make accurate use of spelling, punctuation and grammar.

Question	Answer	Marks
2	**EITHER** **Descriptive writing** **Describe a town or city centre at a busy time of day.**	**25**

Question	Answer	Marks
3	**OR** **Descriptive writing** **Describe the scene at two competitions, one which takes place outdoors and one which takes place indoors.**	**25**

Question	Answer	Marks
4	**OR** **Narrative writing** **Write a story about someone who decides to give up something important to help a friend.**	**25**

Question	Answer	Marks
5	**OR** **Narrative writing** **Write a story which includes the words: 'He turned the corner and was pleasantly surprised by what happened next.'**	**25**

Use the Section B Composition: Content and Structure Table to give a mark out of 10 for content and structure and the Section B Composition: Style and Accuracy Table to give a mark out of 15 for style and accuracy.

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Marking criteria for Section B, Questions 2, 3, 4 or 5

Section B Composition: Content and Structure Table

Level	Marks	Description
5	9–10	**Consistently effective response to the task** • A wide range of descriptive or narrative features used to create a consistently effective response. (W1) • Structure is clear, well balanced and carefully organised for deliberate effect. (W2)
4	7–8	**Mostly effective response to the task** • A range of descriptive or narrative features used to create a mostly effective response. (W1) • Structure is mostly clear, balanced and well organised, with some choices made for deliberate effect. (W2)
3	5–6	**Sometimes effective response to the task** • Some use of descriptive or narrative features to create a sometimes effective response. (W1) • Structure is reasonably clear, with some organisation and some choices made for deliberate effect. (W2)
2	3–4	**Adequate response to the task** • A few ideas and/or experiences are expressed in an attempt to convey what is thought, felt and/or imagined. (W1) • Structure is occasionally clear, with some attempt at organisation to achieve effects. (W2)
1	1–2	**Task is addressed** • An attempt to convey what is thought, felt and/or imagined. (W1) • Some attempt to structure ideas. (W2)
0	0	• No creditable content.

Candidates may use some of the following features:

Descriptions:
- **Focus**: e.g. change from close at hand, to in the distance, or very detailed to impressionistic
- **Atmosphere**: e.g. welcoming, foreboding, pleasing, either uniform or varying
- **Direction**: e.g. opposite views from a high viewpoint
- **Senses**: sight, touch, hearing, smell (but weaker candidates do it too mechanically)
- **Contrast** (especially beyond any contrast given in the question)
- **Setting and people within the setting**
- **Reactions of observer**
- **Minimal or no narrative framework**
- **Figurative language techniques** e.g. simile, metaphor, personification
- **Sound devices** e.g. onomatopoeia, alliteration, assonance

And how the response is all linked together to make a cohesive picture.

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Narratives:

- **Scenario established at beginning**
- **Setting**: sufficient descriptive detail (but not too much)
- **Atmosphere**: e.g. foreboding, mysterious, joyful
- **Senses**: sight, touch, hearing, smell
- **Figurative language techniques** e.g. simile, metaphor, personification
- **Characterisation of protagonists** by, for example, reactions to events/others, direct speech, feelings, 'showing' rather than 'telling'
- **Control of time frame**: e.g. flashback, jumping in the sequence
- **Movement of events**
- **Build-up of tension** (if appropriate)
- **Effective climax**, or at least a definite, clearly signalled ending (or intentional cliff-hanger)

And how the response is all linked together to make a convincing story

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Section B Composition: Style and Accuracy Table

Level	Marks	Description
5	13–15	• Uses a wide range of well-constructed sentences accurately, including complex sentences. (W3) • Precise and effective use of a wide range of vocabulary. (W3) • Highly accurate use of complex spelling, punctuation and grammar. (W5)
4	10–12	• Uses a range of sentence structures accurately, including some complex ones. (W3) • Effective use of a range of vocabulary. (W3) • Accurate use of spelling, punctuation and grammar, including some complex language. (W5)
3	7–9	• Uses most sentence structures accurately, sometimes attempting complex ones with success. (W3) • Uses a straightforward range of appropriate vocabulary. (W3) • Uses a straightforward range of spelling, punctuation and grammar. (W5)
2	4–6	• Uses simple sentence structures accurately which may be repetitive. (W3) • Uses a range of simple vocabulary which may be repetitive. (W3) • Generally accurate use of more simple spelling, punctuation and grammar. (W5)
1	1–3	• Attempts to use simple sentence structures. (W3) • Uses simple vocabulary accurately. (W3) • Some accuracy in simple spelling, punctuation and grammar. (W5)
0	0	• No creditable content.

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