CAMBRIDGE
International Education

Cambridge International AS & A Level

BIOLOGY **9700/31**

Paper 3 Advanced Practical Skills 1 **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.

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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.

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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	'List rule' guidance For questions that require ***n*** responses (e.g. State **two** reasons …): • The response should be read as continuous prose, even when numbered answer spaces are provided. • Any response marked *ignore* in the mark scheme should not count towards ***n***. • Incorrect responses should not be awarded credit but will still count towards ***n***. • 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 ***n*** responses may be ignored even if they include incorrect science.

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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.

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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
	correct point or mark awarded
	correct awarding one mark from marking point or marking group 1. similar numbered ticks are used for marking point or marking groups 2, 3, 4 etc.
	incorrect point or mark not awarded
	information missing or insufficient for credit
	allow or accept
	incorrect or insufficient point ignored while marking the rest of the response
	contradiction in response, mark not awarded
	benefit of the doubt given
	error carried forward applied
	incorrect point or mark not awarded

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Annotation	Meaning
SEEN	point has been noted, but no credit has been given or blank page seen

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Mark scheme abbreviations

;	separates marking points
/	alternative answers for the same point
A	accept (for answers correctly cued by the question, or by extra guidance)
R	reject
I	ignore
( )	the word / phrase in brackets is not required, but sets the context
AW	alternative wording (where responses vary more than usual)
underline	actual word given must be used by candidate (grammatical variants accepted)
max	indicates the maximum number of marks that can be given
ora	or reverse argument
mp	marking point (with relevant number)
ecf	error carried forward
AVP	alternative valid point

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<table>
<tr><th>Question</th><th>Answer</th><th>Marks</th></tr>
<tr><td>1(a)(i)</td><td>1 three correct concentrations (0.8, 0.6, 0.4) ;
2 correct volumes of H and W to make 10 cm^3 of each concentration ; ecf</td><td>2</td></tr>
<tr><td>1(a)(ii)</td><td>1 heading for independent variable: percentage concentration of, hydrogen peroxide / H (before heading for dependent variable), and no units in body of table ;
2 heading for dependent variable: number of drops (in 30 seconds) ;
3 records two results for each concentration ;
4 number of drops for the highest concentration of hydrogen peroxide more than for the lowest concentration of hydrogen peroxide ;
5 decides to record a mean ;</td><td>5</td></tr>
<tr><td>1(a)(iii)</td><td>records the number of drops for U ;</td><td>1</td></tr>
<tr><td>1(a)(iv)</td><td>correct estimate for U based on candidate’s results ;</td><td>1</td></tr>
<tr><td>1(a)(v)</td><td>use water instead of, plant extract / P, or use boiled, plant extract / P ;</td><td>1</td></tr>
<tr><td>1(a)(vi)</td><td>any two (errors and matching improvements) from:
<table>
<tr><th>error</th><th>improvement</th></tr>
<tr><td>1 concentration of hydrogen peroxide decreases ;</td><td>1 use fresh hydrogen peroxide for each test ;</td></tr>
<tr><td>2 P and H are not mixed ;</td><td>2 invert syringe to mix P and H / mix P and H before filling the syringe ;</td></tr>
<tr><td>3 drops start falling before, counting / timing, starts
or
timing starts at different times ;</td><td>3 standardise the time to start, counting / timing ;</td></tr>
<tr><td>4 drops too fast to count ;</td><td>4 measure the volume instead of drops / use an electronic drop counter (light gate) ;</td></tr>
</table></td><td>4</td></tr>
<tr><td>1(a)(vii)</td><td>(increase) more substrate so more, enzyme substrate complexes / successful collisions ;</td><td>1</td></tr>
</table>

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Question	Answer	Marks
1(b)(i)	1 *x*-axis: age / years and female and male and bars labelled 19, 25, 35 **A** *use of a suitable key for male / female* and *y*-axis: concentration of hydrogen peroxide / μmol dm^{-3} ; 2 scale on *x*-axis: even width of six bars and scale on *y*-axis: 5(.0) to 2cm and labelled at least each 2 cm ; 3 correct plotting of all six bars ; 4 horizontal and vertical lines joined precisely (bars grouped by age or sex) ;	**4**
1(b)(ii)	*any **one** from:* *supports* 1 only true for females and data quote ; 2 true for mean values at different ages ; *does not support* 1 not true for males and data quote ; *any **one** from (quality of data):* 1 only three ages ; 2 unknown sample size ; 3 unknown, diet / drink ;	**2**

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<table>
<tr><th>Question</th><th>Answer</th><th>Marks</th></tr>
<tr><td>2(a)(i)</td><td>1 appropriate size <u>and</u> no shading ;
2 draws correct section of the stem ;
3 draws the correct proportion of the epidermis to the tissue layer above the vascular bundles <u>and</u> no cells drawn ;
4 draws vascular bundles attached to the tissue layer above them ;
5 label line <u>and</u> label to phloem ;</td><td>5</td></tr>
<tr><td>2(a)(ii)</td><td>1 appropriate size <u>and</u> lines are sharp and continuous ;
2 draws only four cells from the central tissue <u>and</u> each cell touches at least two other cells ;
3 two lines around each cell <u>and</u> three lines where cells touch ;
4 draws correct shape and size of cells ;
5 label line <u>and</u> label to the cell wall of one cell ;</td><td>5</td></tr>
<tr><td>2(b)(i)</td><td>1 collects differences using only observable differences ;
2, 3, 4, three correct differences ;;;
any three e.g.:

<table><tr><th>feature</th><th>J1</th><th>Fig. 2.2</th></tr><tr><td>vascular bundle – size</td><td>large and small</td><td>same size ;</td></tr><tr><td>vascular bundle – number</td><td>fewer</td><td>more ;</td></tr><tr><td>centre</td><td>contains cells</td><td>hollow ;</td></tr><tr><td>outer thickening</td><td>absent</td><td>present ;</td></tr></table></td><td>4</td></tr>
<tr><td>2(b)(ii)</td><td>any one from:
1 air space <u>and</u> gas exchange / buoyancy / support ;
2 thickening / AW, <u>and</u> support ;</td><td>1</td></tr>
<tr><td>2(c)</td><td>1 correct measurement of scale bar <u>and</u> units ;
2 correct measurement of the diameter of the central region (A–B) <u>and</u> units ;
3 shows the diameter of the central region divided by the measurement of the scale bar <u>and</u> multiplied by 500 ;
4 correct answer <u>and</u> unit ;</td><td>4</td></tr>
</table>

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