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CAMBRIDGE
International Education

Cambridge International AS & A Level

PHYSICS **9702/53**

Paper 5 Planning, Analysis and Evaluation **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.

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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
BOD	benefit of the doubt given
1	correct awarding one mark from additional detail 1. similar numbered ticks are used for additional detail 2, 3, 4 etc.
	correct point or mark awarded
P	defining the problem mark
ECF	error carried forward applied
SF	error in number of significant figures
I	incorrect or insufficient point ignored while marking the rest of the response
	incorrect point or mark not awarded
U	incorrect unit
^	information missing or insufficient for credit

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Annotation	Meaning
MO	methods of data collection mark
SEEN	point has been noted, but no credit has been given or blank page seen
REP	repetition in response

Abbreviations

ECF	error carried forward
SF	significant figures
POT	power of ten

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Question	Answer	Marks	Guidance
1	**Defining the problem**		Annotate with P.
	Vary *a* and measure *T* / period (of oscillations) **or** *a* is the independent variable and *T* / period (of oscillations) is the dependent variable	**1**	This mark could be awarded having read the candidate's script all the way through. **Allow** *t* **Allow** time for period **Not** *a* or *T* constant
	Keep *L* constant	**1**	**Allow** same for constant
	Methods of data collection		Annotate with M0
	Labelled diagram of workable experiment including: • rod fixed to stand(s) • bar suspended by strings • stand(s) on a bench • two labels from bench, *a*, *L*, string, bar, rod, stand / boss / clamp, centre of bar.	**1**	**Allow** fixed to a ceiling **Ignore** rule
	Measure the time *t* for *n* oscillations **and** $T = t / n$	**1**	**Ignore** counting oscillations in a fixed time **Note** $n \geqslant 5$ if *n* specified
	Use a stopwatch to measure $(n)T$ or time for *n* oscillations	**1**	**Allow** period **Allow** timer for stopwatch **Ignore** vague reference to time **Allow** video and detailed use of time stamp for start and end of oscillation
	Use rule(r) to determine *a* **and** *L*	**1**	**Allow** calipers **Not** micrometer

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Question	Answer	Marks	Guidance
1	**Method of Analysis**		Annotate with ✓
	Plot a graph of lg T against lg a **or** lg T against lg $\frac{1}{a}$ **or** ln T against ln a or equivalent	**1**	**Note** drawn axes take priority. **Allow** log for lg
	$q = -$gradient for lg T against lg a **or** $q =$ gradient for lg T against lg $\frac{1}{a}$	**1**	**Note** Must be consistent with drawn graph. $q = \frac{1}{\text{gradient}}$ for lg a against lg $\frac{1}{T}$
	$P = \frac{1}{2\pi}\sqrt{\frac{M}{L}} \times 10^{y\text{-intercept}}$ for lg T against lg a or lg T against lg $\frac{1}{a}$ **or** $P = \frac{1}{2\pi}\sqrt{\frac{M}{L}} \times e^{y\text{-intercept}}$ for ln T against ln a	**1**	**Note** Must be consistent with drawn graph. $P = \frac{1}{2\pi}\sqrt{\frac{M}{L}} \times 10^{q\times y\text{-intercept}}$ for lg a against lg $\frac{1}{T}$
	Additional detail including safety considerations	**6**	Annotate with numbered tick
	D1 Precaution linked to bar / rod falling onto bench, e.g. G-clamp stand(s) to bench to prevent bar / rod falling **or** cushions / sand tray (on bench / on the surface immediately below bar) to prevent bar / rod falling		**Allow** heavy weights on stand(s) **Ignore** cushions / sand tray on floor for use of bench **Note** position may be confirmed from diagram
	D2 Keep M constant		**Allow** same for constant
	D3 Method to measure M, e.g. use a (top-pan) balance		**Allow** scales **Ignore** scale **Allow** spring balance **Allow** newton meter / weight with division by g

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Question	Answer	Marks	Guidance
1	D4 Description of method to ensure each *a* is measured from the centre of the bar, e.g. measure length of bar and divide by two and mark midpoint of bar **or** measure from the end of the bar to each string to ensure each *a* is the same		**Note** text mark **Allow** determine balance point and mark the balance point
	D5 Description of method to keep bar horizontal e.g. use a spirit level or measure *L* at different positions on the bar / measure height of bar from the bench in different positions to check *L* / height are the same **or** description of method to keep the strings vertical, e.g. check with set square against bar or rod and string / measure *a* to each string at the bar and at the rod to check that they are same / use a plumb line		**Note** text mark **Allow** level for horizontal **Ignore** rod
	D6 Description of method to prevent strings from sliding, e.g. use adhesive putty to prevent the strings from sliding		**Allow** notches or holes or grooves
	D7 Method to determine accurate values of *T*, e.g. use small amplitude / angle oscillations or use a fiducial marker at the midpoint of the oscillation		**Allow** displacement **Ignore** not (too) large
	D8 Use large values of *L* to increase *T* (to reduce percentage uncertainty of *T*)		**Allow** *t* for *T*
	D9 Repeat determination of *T* for the same value of *a* **and** calculate the average *T*		**Allow** *t* for *T* **Allow** each for same

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Question	Answer	Marks	Guidance
1	D10 Relationship valid <u>if</u> a straight line is produced (with y-intercept = $\lg\left(2\pi P\sqrt{\frac{L}{M}}\right)$). Do not accept through the origin.		**Note** Must be consistent with drawn graph. **Ignore** 'data' / 'graph' / 'experiment' / 'results' / 'correlation' valid.

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Question	Answer	Marks	Guidance
2(a)	gradient = $\frac{18\beta z}{g(\rho-\sigma)}$	1	
2(b)	$\frac{1}{d^2}$ / mm^{-2} 0.15 or 0.148 0.11 or 0.111 0.087 or 0.0865 0.059 or 0.0595 0.052 or 0.0517 0.040 or 0.0400		
	Values of $\frac{1}{d^2}$ correct as shown in table above.	1	**Allow** mixture of sf in $\frac{1}{d^2}$
	Uncertainties in $\frac{1}{d^2}$ from ± 0.01 to ± 0.002.	1	**Allow** more than 1 sf **Ignore** one minor variation in uncertainties in rows 2–5 **Allow** uncertainty in row one between ±0.010 and ±0.013
2(c)(i)	Six points from **(b)** plotted correctly. Must be within half a small square. Diameter of points must be less than half a small square.	1	Check second and fourth plots from the left. **Allow** ecf from **2(b)**
	Error bars in $\frac{1}{d^2}$ plotted correctly. All error bars to be plotted. Total length of bar must be accurate to less than half a small square and symmetrical.	1	Check second and fourth plots from the left. **Allow** ecf from **2(b)**

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Question	Answer	Marks	Guidance
2(c)(ii)	Straight line of best fit drawn. Do not accept line from top point to bottom point. Thickness of the line should be less than half a small square. Line must pass between (0.064, 2.50) and (0.066, 2.50) **and** between (0.134, 5.50) and (0.138, 5.50)	**1**	**Note** no ecf
	Worst acceptable line drawn. Steepest or shallowest possible line that passes through all the error bars. Thickness of the line should be less than half a small square. All error bars must be plotted.	**1**	**Allow** ecf from points / error bars plotted incorrectly – examiner judgement. **Note** wal may be constrained by intermediate error bar.
2(c)(iii)	Gradient determined with clear substitution of data points into $\Delta y / \Delta x$; distance between data points must be greater than half the length of the drawn line.	**1**	Check the read offs. Work to less than half a small square in each direction. **Ignore** POT. **Expect** ≈ 36 to 48 ($\times 10^{-6}$) **Expect** $\Delta x \geqslant 0.07$
	Gradient determined of worst acceptable line with clear substitution of data points into $\Delta y / \Delta x$. uncertainty = (gradient of line of best fit – gradient of worst acceptable line) **or** uncertainty = ½ (steepest worst line gradient – shallowest worst line gradient)	**1**	Method of determining absolute uncertainty. Check read-offs are not used in the bfl gradient unless on wal. Check subtraction.
2(d)	(6600 ± 100) (kg m^{-3})	**1**	**Ignore** missing brackets

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Question	Answer	Marks	Guidance
2(e)(i)	Value of β determined using gradient **and** β given to 2 or 3 sf $\beta = \frac{g(\rho - \sigma) \times \text{gradient}}{18z}$	**1**	**Ignore** POT **Allow** ecf from **2(c)(iii)** and **2(d)** **Expect** ≈ 1.5×10^{n}
	β determined using gradient **and** β given with SI units with appropriate power of ten Unit of β: $\text{kg m}^{-1}\text{ s}^{-1}$	**1**	**Allow** ecf from **2(c)(iii)** and **2(d)** **Expect** ≈ 1.5 ($\text{kg m}^{-1}\text{ s}^{-1}$) **or** ≈ 0.0015 ($\text{kg mm}^{-1}\text{ s}^{-1}$) **or** ≈ 1.5 ($\text{g mm}^{-1}\text{ s}^{-1}$) **Allow** Pa s or N m^{-2} s **Not** $\text{kg mm m}^{-2}\text{ s}^{-1}$ **Allow** unit for gradient substituted into correct expression but incorrectly calculated
2(e)(ii)	Percentage uncertainty in β with method shown. $\%uncert = \left(\frac{\Delta(\rho - \sigma)}{(\rho - \sigma)} + \frac{\Delta\text{gradient}}{\text{gradient}} + \frac{\Delta z}{z}\right) \times 100$ **or** Max/min methods, e.g. $\max \beta = \frac{g}{18} \times \frac{\max(\rho - \sigma) \times \max \text{gradient}}{\min z}$	**1**	**Allow** max / min methods **Allow** ecf from **2(c)(iii)** and **2(d)** **Note** must be greater than 2% (3.5% with correct **2(d)**)

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Question	Answer	Marks	Guidance
2(f)	t determined to a minimum of 2 sf from **2(c)(iii)** or **2(e)** with clear method **and** use of correct power of ten for d. $t = \text{gradient} \times \frac{1}{(0.012\ (\text{m}))^2}$ **or** $t = \frac{18\beta z}{g(\rho - \sigma) \times (0.012\ (\text{m}))^2}$	**1**	**Allow** ecf from **2(c)(iii)**, **2(d)** and **2(e)(i)** **Expect** ≈ 0.28 (s) **Note** $\frac{1}{(0.012\ (\text{m}))^2} = 6944$
	Absolute uncertainty determined with correct substitution. For use of gradient from **2(c)(iii)**: $\Delta t = \left(\frac{\Delta\text{gradient}}{\text{gradient}} + \frac{2 \times 0.01}{1.20}\right) \times t$ **or** $\Delta t = \left(\frac{\text{max gradient}}{(\text{min}\, d)^2}\right) - t$ **or** $\Delta t = t - \left(\frac{\text{min gradient}}{(\text{max}\, d)^2}\right)$ **or** For use of β from **2(e)**: $\Delta t = \left(\frac{\Delta\beta}{\beta} + \frac{\Delta z}{z} + \frac{\Delta(\rho - \sigma)}{(\rho - \sigma)} + \frac{2 \times 0.01}{1.20}\right) \times t$ **or** $\Delta t = \left(\frac{18 \times \text{max}\,\beta \times \text{max}\, z}{g \times \text{min}(\rho - \sigma) \times (0.0120 - 0.0001)^2}\right) - t$ **or** $\Delta t = t - \left(\frac{18 \times \text{min}\,\beta \times \text{min}\, z}{g \times \text{max}(\rho - \sigma)(0.0120 + 0.0001)^2}\right)$	**1**	**Allow** ecf from **2(c)(iii)**, **2(d)** and **2(e)(i)** and **2(e)(ii)** for t $2\Delta d / d = 0.0167$ **Allow** clear method **Note** substitution needed **Allow** clear method **Note** substitution needed **Note** substitution needed

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