CAMBRIDGE
International Education

Cambridge IGCSE™

COMBINED SCIENCE **0653/52**

Paper 5 Practical Test **February/March 2026**

MARK SCHEME

Maximum Mark: 40

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 February/March 2026 series for most Cambridge IGCSE, Cambridge International A and AS Level components, and some Cambridge O Level components.

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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.

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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.

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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Mark scheme abbreviations

;	separates marking points
/	separates alternative responses for the same marking point
ecf	error carried forward
AVP	alternative valid point
ORA	or reverse argument
AW	alternative wording
underline	actual word given must be used by candidate (grammatical variants accepted)
( )	the word / phrase in brackets is not required but sets the context

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Question	Answer	Marks
1(a)(i)	diameter recorded in mm ;	**1**
1(a)(ii)	correct calculation ; answer to 2 s.f. ;	**2**
1(a)(iii)	intensity score recorded for at least one test-tube ; all four values recorded using intensity score number (0–5) ; intensity scores increase from **A** to **D** with no decrease ;	**3**
1(a)(iv)	greater number of pieces / more pieces, greater intensity score ;	**1**
1(a)(v)	as surface area increases, rate (of diffusion) increases ;	**1**
1(b)(i)	hazard: cutting / use of (sharp edge of) knife / scalpel ; precaution: cut away from hands / cut on stable surface ;	**2**
1(b)(ii)	to stop (further) diffusion/reaction / stop (further) colour change / so that results are taken at 10 minutes / after same time ;	**1**
1(b)(iii)	*any **two** from:* intensity score is subjective / difficult to judge colour or intensity score ; colour chart is grey scale (not red) ; beetroot pieces (at the start) might be different sizes / cutting may be inconsistent ; takes time to add the water / pour solution into test tubes (so not exactly 10 minutes) ;	**2**

Question	Answer	Marks
2(a)(i)	temperature of water measured to nearest 0.5 °C ; maximum temperature of mixture that is **higher** than temperature of the water ;	**2**

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Question	Answer	Marks
2(a)(ii)	correct temperature increase calculated ;	**1**
2(a)(iii)	white (solid) into blue solution ;	**1**
2(a)(iv)	cup is a better insulator (than beaker) / less thermal energy is lost ;	**1**
2(b)(i)	horizontal axis labelled ‘mass of **G** (added to water) / g’ AND vertical axis labelled ‘temperature increase / °C ’; suitable linear scales such that plotted points occupy at least half of the grid ; correct plots to ± ½ small square ;	**3**
2(b)(ii)	point circled at 2.0 g and 14.0 °C ;	**1**
2(b)(iii)	best fit straight line <u>through the origin</u> ;	**1**
2(b)(iv)	there is a straight line that goes through the origin ;	**1**
2(c)(i)	<u>blue / coloured</u> solution masks the (colour of the) precipitate ;	**1**
2(c)(ii)	leave time for / allow the precipitate to settle / filter (to see the residue) ;	**1**

Question	Answer	Marks
3(a)	value of m recorded to the nearest 0.1 g ;	**1**
3(b)	value of V recorded to the nearest cm^3 ;	**1**
3(c)	correct density calculation ;	**1**

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Question	Answer	Marks
3(d)	**Method 1** calculates percentage difference AND states appropriate conclusion ; **M1** (8.00 – **3(c)**) ÷ 8.00 × 100 OR (8.00 – **3(c)**) ÷ 3(c) × 100 **M2** correct calculation of % difference and stated No (not equal) if > 10% or Yes (equal) if < 10% ;	**2**
3(e)	*any **one** from:* • pot not filled to brim ; • not all water from tray poured into measuring cylinder / some sticks to tray / some on outside of pot / some water spilled (out of the tray) ;	**1**
3(f)	larger (density) AND because (same) *m* divided by a smaller *V* ;	**1**

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Question	Answer	Marks
4	***one*** *from each section and any other two marks:* **1 Apparatus** ray box / laser ; protractor and ruler / measuring tape ; set square (used to draw normal) ; **2 Method** method described clearly such that another student could use it to obtain suitable results, e.g. use more than one value of *i* and measure *d* ; **3 Measurements** measure *i* / angle of incidence / angle between incident ray and normal ; at least 5 different angles ; **4 Table of results** table with heading *i* / angle (of incidence) / ° ; table with heading *d* / cm (or mm) ; **5 Processing results and conclusion** plot a graph of *d* against *i* / angle (of incidence) *;*	**7**

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