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CAMBRIDGE
International Education

Cambridge International AS & A Level

PSYCHOLOGY **9990/11**

Paper 1 Approaches, Issues and Debates **October/November 2025**

MARK SCHEME

Maximum Mark: 60

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.

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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.

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Social Science-Specific Marking Principles
(for point-based marking)

1 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 wrongly.)
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)

2 Presentation of mark scheme:

- Slashes (/) or the word 'or' separate alternative ways of making the same point.
- Semi colons (;) bullet points (•) or figures in brackets (1) separate different points.
- Content in the answer column in brackets is for examiner information/context to clarify the marking but is not required to earn the mark (except Accounting syllabuses where they indicate negative numbers).

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3 Calculation questions:

- The mark scheme will show the steps in the most likely correct method(s), the mark for each step, the correct answer(s) and the mark for each answer
- If working/explanation is considered essential for full credit, this will be indicated in the question paper and in the mark scheme. In all other instances, the correct answer to a calculation should be given full credit, even if no supporting working is shown.
- Where the candidate uses a valid method which is not covered by the mark scheme, award equivalent marks for reaching equivalent stages.
- Where an answer makes use of a candidate's own incorrect figure from previous working, the 'own figure rule' applies: full marks will be given if a correct and complete method is used. Further guidance will be included in the mark scheme where necessary and any exceptions to this general principle will be noted.

4 Annotation:

- For point marking, ticks can be used to indicate correct answers and crosses can be used to indicate wrong answers. There is no direct relationship between ticks and marks. Ticks have no defined meaning for levels of response marking.
- For levels of response marking, the level awarded should be annotated on the script.
- Other annotations will be used by examiners as agreed during standardisation, and the meaning will be understood by all examiners who marked that paper.

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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
	A creditworthy point made by the candidate A creditworthy 'what' for a generic everyday application question
	An incorrect response
BOD	Benefit of Doubt
REP	Repetition of a point
	Unclear response
I	The named issue in the 10-mark essay
L1 L2 L3 L4 L5	Levels used for the 10-mark essay (L1–L5) Levels used for the 8-mark similarity/difference question (L1–L4)

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Annotation	Meaning
NAQ	Not Answering the Question
SEEN	The blank page has been seen. An attached response has been seen.
+	A creditworthy strength in the 10-mark essay. A creditworthy 'how' for a generic everyday application question
–	A creditworthy weakness in the 10-mark essay.
b	A creditworthy point in the 10-mark essay that is **b**rief
d	A creditworthy point in the 10-mark essay that is **d**etailed
e	A creditworthy ethical guideline in **Q6(b)** A relevant example in **Q4**

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Question	Answer	Marks	Guidance
1(a)	**In the study by Hassett et al. (monkey toy preferences), an example of a toy in the 'wheeled' category was a car.** **Identify <u>one</u> other toy that was in the 'wheeled' category.** 1 mark for a correct toy. Wagon/truck/construction vehicle/shopping cart/dump truck.	**1**	If more than one response given, take first one only. Accept trolley, bin wagon, lorry.
1(b)	**Outline what was meant by the behaviour 'drag' as used in this study.** 1 mark per correct point. Moving the toy <u>along the ground</u>. With the toy <u>behind</u> the monkey.	**2**	List is definitive. Do **not** credit 'drag the toy'. Accept 'pulling' as meaning 'behind the monkey'.
1(c)	**Outline what is meant by the term 'socialisation'.** 2 marks full/detailed definition. 1 mark partial/brief definition. e.g., 2 marks Socialisation is any mechanism that changes/adapts a behaviour to societal/cultural expectations. The way someone is educated/reinforced/conditioned/learns socially acceptable/typical behaviours. e.g., 1 mark The way society has made certain behaviours typical/'the norm'. The process of conforming to roles. What society expects from a person. There are other creditworthy responses.	**2**	Ignore reference to 'social behaviour' or 'interacting with people'. 1 mark = changing/adapting or equivalent. 1 mark = societal/cultural norms/expectations or equivalent. (Do **not** accept environment as this mechanism).

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Question	Answer	Marks	Guidance
2(a)	**From the study by Milgram (obedience):** **One conclusion from the study was that when a person's responsibility is taken from them, they are willing to harm someone else.** **Outline <u>one</u> other conclusion from this study.** 2 marks full/detailed conclusion. 1 mark partial/brief conclusion. Individuals appear to be much more obedient to an authority figure than we might expect (2 marks). People will follow/listen to an authority figure even if it means harming another person (2 marks). People find it stressful to follow destructive orders from a person in authority (2 marks). People will be obedient to an authority figure (1 mark). 26 participants pressed the 450v switch (0 marks: result). There are other creditworthy responses.	**2**	Ignore responses that are simply results. Do **not** credit responses that are the same as the conclusion in the question.

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Question	Answer	Marks	Guidance
2(b)	**Explain <u>one</u> strength of this study.** 1 mark for identifying the strength via naming or description. 1 mark for outlining the strength with an example from Milgram. e.g. The procedure was standardised so could be replicated/tested for reliability (1 mark: identification). For example, <u>all</u> participants received a 45v shock (1 mark: example). There are other creditworthy responses, including validity/credibility, debriefing of participants, collection of quantitative and/or qualitative data etc.	**2**	Do **not** credit laboratory <u>experiment</u> arguments (e.g., IV/DV cause-effect), but in a laboratory so controlled can be credited for max 1 mark. Validity by itself is **not** enough for the identification mark.

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Question	Answer	Marks	Guidance
3(a)	**From the study by Fagen et al. (elephant learning):** **The 'capture technique' was used in the training of the elephants.** **Outline what is meant by the 'capture technique' as used in this study.** 1 mark per correct point. 1 mark available for example from study. The trainer waits for an animal to perform a specified behaviour. This has to be spontaneous/natural. This behaviour is then marked/rewarded repeatedly. The behaviour of blow was captured from a natural exhale (from the elephant).	**2**	List is definitive. Spontaneous = 1 mark Reward = 1 mark Accept 'accidental'.
3(b)	**Outline <u>one</u> result about the mean success rate for the 'trunk wash' task over time.** 2 marks for the result with a meaningful comparison. 1 mark for result with no meaningful comparison. e.g., 2 marks There was a general trend of the higher the number of sessions, the higher the mean percentage pass trunk washes. There was a dip in mean percentage success rates between sessions 25 and 30. e.g., 1 mark The elephants got better over time/had more success/increased over time.	**2**	Do **not** credit that 4 juveniles passed/adult failed. Do **not** credit the number of trials it took to pass the trunk wash. If two numbers are approximately correct (e.g., 36% up to 86%) = 2 marks.

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Question	Answer	Marks	Guidance
4	**From the study by Perry et al. (personal space):** **Describe the procedure of <u>one</u> trial for Experiment 1 from when the fixation point appeared until the end of the trial**. 1 mark per correct point The participant was shown a still picture. This was of a circular room. There was a figure at the centre of the room. There was an approaching figure. This came from one of eight entrances. This was a ball/friend/authority/stranger (only 1 mark for example) There was a 3s animation of the figuring approaching the centre. Ps were asked to imagine themselves at the centre of circle. They had to press the spacebar when they wanted the figure to stop. Or the trial ended when the figure collided with the 'participant'.	**4**	List is definitive. Do **not** credit fixation point as this is in the question. Do **not** credit that the name of the protagonist was displayed on the screen as this happened **before** the fixation point appeared.

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Question	Answer	Marks	Guidance
5(a)	**From the study by Baron-Cohen et al. (eyes test):** **The Group 1 sample consisted of 15 participants who were all male.** **Identify <u>two</u> other features of the Group 1 sample.** 1 mark per correct feature. Adults. Diagnosed with AS/HFA. Recruited via advertisements in magazine/volunteer sample. Similar socioeconomic class to Group 2. Similar education background to Group 2. **Mean** IQ 115/similar IQ for Group 4. **Mean** age = 29.7 years.	**2**	List is definitive. Age tolerance is 29–30 years. Do credit 'from the UK'.

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Question	Answer	Marks	Guidance
5(b)	**Explain <u>one</u> strength of the revised eyes test.** 1 mark for identifying the strength of the RET. 1 mark for explaining the strength using an example from the RET. e.g., Quantitative data is collected so easy to compare/is comparable (1 mark: identification). This means that the ability on the eyes test can be compared between those diagnosed with AS/HFA and those in the control groups to detect Theory of Mind (1 mark: explanation). Published so can replicate and test for reliability (1 mark: identification). This means that other researchers can use the eyes test on a different sample of AS/HFA participants to see if the same results/deficit happens (1 mark: explanation). There are other creditworthy responses.	**2**	Do credit responses about improvements from the original version of the eyes test. Do **not** credit strengths about the <u>study itself</u>, it **must** be about the RET.

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Question	Answer	Marks	Guidance
6(a)	**In the background to their study, Pozzulo et al. (line-ups) outlined the role of social factors in identification errors made by children.** **Outline the role of social factors in these errors.** 1 mark per correct point. The experimenter/police officer might be seen as an authority figure. This makes the child feel intimidated/nervous/stressed. The child chooses to not get into trouble. The child might want to 'please' the experimenter/police officer so chooses anyway. It could be social pressure affecting identification in line-ups (rather than cognitive). The mere presentation of a line-up from an adult might make the child feel like a choice has to be made. Not selecting might indicate that the child is not willing to take part and therefore a wrong choice is made. The child might guess who the experimenter/police officer thinks is the culprit and choose them. There are other creditworthy points.	**3**	Do **not** credit findings from the study by Pozzulo. There is no identification mark available.

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Question	Answer	Marks	Guidance
6(b)	**Two friends, Doris and Tony are discussing the ethics of the study by Pozzulo et al. (line-ups).** **Doris says the study is ethical, but Tony says it is <u>not</u> ethical.** **Outline why you think <u>either</u> Doris <u>or</u> Tony is correct, using evidence from the study.** 1 mark for identifying a <u>relevant</u> ethical guideline. Up to 4 marks for explanation(s) or consequence(s) of breaking/adhering to guidelines. e.g., Doris Consent <u>for the child participants</u> is assumed (1 mark: identification) as the child's parent/guardian completed the Demographic and Cartoon Watching Form/consented on behalf of their child (1 mark: explanation). The task of watching a line-up and having to identify a cartoon character is not stressful (1 mark: explanation). Also, the children were already familiar with Dora/Diego so seeing these faces amongst others would not be seen as psychologically stressful (1 mark: explanation). e.g., Tony The children might have felt some psychological stress in the target-absent line-up (1 mark: identification). This is because we know that social pressures can impact on children, and they may have chosen under cognitive stress (1 mark: explanation). It can also be argued that there was no right to withdraw (1 mark: guideline) as participants were questioned by an adult and they may have felt like they had to answer (1 mark: explanation). There are other creditworthy arguments.	**4**	If both Doris and Tony feature in the answer, mark them independently and credit the highest score. If the candidate mixes up Doris and Tony (e.g. says Tony but gives an ethical based answer) or does not choose a name, then max 2 and annotate with a ? Tick–e = ethical guideline Relevant guidelines are: Doris: consent; harm/stress; debrief; confidentiality. Tony: harm/stress; consent (only award if in context of children); right to withdraw. Do **not** accept deception.

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Question	Answer	Marks	Guidance
7	**The debate about individual and situational explanations relates to the study by Piliavin et al. (subway Samaritans):** **Outline what is meant by this debate, including <u>one</u> example from the individual explanation and <u>one</u> example from the situational explanation, each from the study by Piliavin et al.** 1 mark for outlining individual explanation **plus** 1 mark for example from Piliavin. 1 mark for outlining situational explanation **plus** 1 mark for example from Piliavin. e.g., individual The individual side refers to behaviours from factors within the person (dispositional) (1 mark). Some people left the critical area after the victim collapsed as they had a personality of not helping (1 mark). e.g., situational The situational side refers to behaviour from factors in the external environment (1 mark). Overall, the ill victim was helped more than the drunk victim. This could be because the drunk victim had caused the situation of collapsing themselves, which was not true for the ill victim (1 mark). There are other creditworthy examples.	**4**	Ignore tautological definitions. Example marks can <u>only</u> be awarded for Piliavin's study. Tick = definition Tick–e = example from Piliavin. Go with the logic of the candidate.

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Question	Answer	Marks	Guidance
8(a)	**Your friend, Pavel, is complaining that he cannot relax. He tells you that his job is stressful. He has come to you for advice on how to relax.** **Using your knowledge of the study by Hölzel et al. (mindfulness and brain scans):** **Outline the advice you would give to Pavel.** 1 mark per piece of advice clearly based on the study by Hölzel et al. Pavel should engage in mindful yoga. With some stretching exercises/slow movement in conjunction with breathing. He can be taught to become 'fully aware' of his body sensations. He could begin to mentally note these feelings of stress, so he knows when he feels them. He could begin "observing" where he notices stressful stimuli. He can be encouraged to practice this for 45 minutes per day/practice at work or home. He should continue to engage in mindfulness for around 8 weeks. There are other creditworthy pieces of advice.	**4**	No credit for justifying advice as this is not what the question is about. Do **not** credit 'mindfulness' by itself. 1 mark **max** can be awarded for identification of a relevant task, e.g., MBSR class, yoga, meditation, body scan etc. Only credit any timeframe **once**, e.g., 8-weeks, 45 mins, long-term, daily etc. e.g., he should attend an 8-week MBSR course = 2 marks total (1 for MBSR and 1 from the timeframe). Credit descriptions of what would happen in body scanning, yoga, meditation etc.

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Question	Answer	Marks	Guidance
8(b)	**Explain <u>one</u> reason for <u>one</u> piece of advice you outlined in part (a).** 2 marks for full/detailed reason either based on findings of the study or knowledge of mechanisms of technique (e.g., mindfulness, meditation). 1 mark for partial/brief reason. e.g., 2 marks One result from the study showed that engaging in mindfulness increased 'observing' behaviour so Pavel can identify and control stressors at work, therefore, reducing stress. Meditation allows Pavel to focus on one thing at a time allowing him to reconnect/make time for himself and not let work dominate. There was an increase in grey matter in the MBSR group in areas that could control stress/emotion. e.g., 1 mark In the study by Hölzel, the effects of mindfulness were seen in the long-term. There was an increase in grey matter in the MBSR group. Meditation helps to clear stressful thoughts. Mindfulness allows you to relax/promotes relaxation.	**2**	The response must be linked to something mentioned in Q8(a).

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Question	Answer	Marks	Guidance
9(a)	**From the study by Dement and Kleitman (sleep and dreams):** **Describe how the EEG (electroencephalogram) was used in this study.** 1 mark per correct point. Electrodes were placed next to the eyes. Electrodes were placed on the scalp. All electrode lead wires were further attached to top of the head. They were made into a single cord. To prevent entanglement/give P free movement. The EEG ran continuously (all night). The speed of paper (3 or 6 mm per sec) allowed easy recognition of eye-movements. The eye movements picked up by the EEG allowed the researcher to wake up the P at specific times (in REM or NREM)/used to identify stage of sleep the participant was in. It could measure the direction of eye movement (during dreaming).	**4**	List is definitive. Do **not** credit 'on the eyes', in the brain' or 'attached to head' (too generic). Used to detect brain waves/electrical (brain) activity/frequency and amplitude = 1 mark max.

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Question	Answer	Marks	Guidance
9(b)	**Explain <u>two</u> similarities between the study by Dement and Kleitman (sleep and dreams) and one other study from the biological approach**. **Do <u>not</u> refer to brain measurement techniques.** Use the marking grid below. 4 marks for the similarity (twice), e.g., research techniques used, type of data collected (quantitative/qualitative), sampling technique, ethics. e.g., similarity 4 marks Both studies collected quantitative data which allowed for direct comparisons between groups/conditions (explanation). In the Dement study, the number of times dreams were recalled in REM and NREM were recorded and compared for differences. Also, in the study by Hassett, the duration of play with wheeled and plush toys was recorded so sex differences between monkeys could be seen. 3 marks Both studies collected quantitative data. In the Dement study, the number of times dreams were recalled in REM and NREM were recorded and compared for differences. Also, in the study by Hassett, the duration of play with wheeled and plush toys was recorded. 2 marks Both studies collected quantitative data. In the Dement study, the number of times dreams were recalled in REM and NREM were recorded. 1 mark Both Dement and Hassett collected quantitative data.	**8**	The other studies from the biological approach are Hölzel and Hassett. Do accept Perry if about biological mechanisms. Award L1–L4 for <u>each</u> similarity. For Level 4 there must be some attempt at *explaining* the similarity. Ignore responses about brain measurement techniques like EEG/MRI etc. Both investigated biology = L1 max. For Dement vs. Hölzel: Both studied brain = L0 Both used humans = L1 Repeated measures = L3 max.

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<table>
<tr><th>Question</th><th>Answer</th><th>Marks</th><th>Guidance</th></tr>
<tr><td>9(b)</td><td>
<table>
<tr><th>Mark/ Level</th><th>Description</th></tr>
<tr><td>4</td><td>The similarity/difference is well explained using both studies as examples.</td></tr>
<tr><td>3</td><td>The similarity/difference is well explained but only one study is used as an example OR
both studies are used briefly.</td></tr>
<tr><td>2</td><td>The similarity/difference is brief with an attempt at using at least one study as an example OR
The similarity/difference is well explained but there is no study evidence.</td></tr>
<tr><td>1</td><td>The similarity/difference is brief with no attempt at using the studies as examples.</td></tr>
<tr><td>0</td><td>No creditable response.</td></tr>
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Question	Answer	Marks	Guidance
10	**Evaluate the study by Bandura et al. (aggression) in terms of <u>two</u> strengths and <u>two</u> weaknesses**. **At least one of your evaluation points <u>must</u> be about ethics**. Strengths include reliability (standardisation), quantitative data, validity. Weaknesses include ecological validity, ethics, generalisability, quantitative data. Example: in detail The study collected quantitative data which makes it easier to make meaningful comparisons between groups/conditions. They measured things like number of times a physical/verbal aggression was imitated. This meant there could be a direct comparison between aggressive/nonaggressive models or male/female models. Example: brief but in context (named issue) The children may have been psychologically harmed/stressed by watching an adult beat up a Bobo doll in front of them. Example: no context There was a standardised procedure meaning it could be replicated/tested for reliability.	**10**	

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Level	Description	Mark
5	• Very good evaluation including the named issue. • Thoroughly addresses both strengths and both weaknesses in detail. • Selection of evidence is very thorough and effective.	9–10
4	• Good evaluation including the named issue. • Addresses strengths and weaknesses but may include three or four points. The majority of the points are in depth. • Selection of evidence is thorough and effective.	7–8
3	• Mostly appropriate evaluation but may not include the named issue. • Addresses either two strengths or two weaknesses in detail or one of each in detail or all four briefly. • Selection of evidence is mostly effective.	5–6
2	• Weak evaluation and may not include the named issue. • Addresses either a strength or a weakness. Evaluation points are brief. • Some points may have no context. • Selection of evidence is sometimes appropriate.	3–4
1	• Little or no evaluation. • Discussion of strengths and weaknesses is absent or superficial. • Selection of evidence is limited.	1–2
0	• No creditable response.	

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