CAMBRIDGE
International Education

Cambridge International AS & A Level

PHYSICS **9702/21**

Paper 2 AS Level Structured Questions **May/June 2026**

MARK SCHEME

Maximum Mark: 60

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
	Information missing or insufficient for credit
	Arithmetic error
	Benefit of the doubt given
	Contradiction in response, mark not awarded
	Incorrect point or mark not awarded
	Error carried forward applied
	Ignore the response
	Mandatory mark not awarded
	Power of ten error
	Blank page seen
	Error in number of significant figures

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Annotation	Meaning
TE	Transcription error
	Correct point or mark awarded
XP	Incorrect physics
SC	Special Case

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Question	Answer	Marks	Guidance
1(a)	rate of change of momentum	**B1**	Allow 'change in momentum / time (taken)' Allow 'change in momentum over time' Allow 'change in momentum per (unit) time' Allow 'ratio of change in momentum and time' Not 'rate of change of momentum per unit time' Not 'momentum / time' or 'change of rate of momentum' Not 'change of momentum in unit time' (as no ratio) Ignore 'change in momentum per second' Ignore 'mass × acceleration' Ignore a symbol expression unless symbols are explained. Ignore any units. Ignore 'force is proportional to rate of change of momentum'
1(b)(i)	mass decreases (as fuel is consumed)	**B1**	Allow 'weight' or '*m*' for 'mass'. Allow 'mass of fuel / rocket' for 'mass' Allow ↓ for decreases and ↑ for increases (BOD) Allow 'lighter in mass' but ignore just '(rocket is) lighter'
	(thrust force is constant so) acceleration increases (so gradient of speed-time graph increases)	**B1**	Allow 'speed increases at an increasing rate (with time)' for 'acceleration increases' Allow '*F*' to mean 'thrust force' and '*a*' to mean 'acceleration', so: '*F*=*ma*, and *F* is constant, so *a* increases' is OK for the B1 mark, but do not allow the B1 mark if *F* is described as decreasing. Ignore any reference to 'upthrust' instead of thrust (BOD) Not 'resultant force is constant'

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Question	Answer	Marks	Guidance
1(b)(ii)	calculate / find gradient	**B1**	Allow 'slope' for gradient (BOD) Allow 'use / take' for calculate (BOD) Allow 'gradient = acceleration'
	either : gradient (of tangent drawn) at $t = 0$ *or:* (gradient of) tangent drawn at $t = 0$	**B1**	
1(b)(iii)	$F = ma$ $T - mg = ma$ $T = 2.83 \times 10^6 \times (2.5 + 9.81)$	**C1**	Allow any calculated force (e.g. $2.83 \times 10^6 \times 2.5 = 7.1 \times 10^6$ N) to imply $F=ma$ for the C1 mark
	$= 3.5 \times 10^7$ N	**A1**	
1(b)(iv)	*either* : $v = 362$ m s^{-1} (from graph) *or* : $m = 2.83 \times 10^6 - (60 \times 2.0 \times 10^4)$ $= 1.63 \times 10^6$ kg	**C1**	<u>The C1 marks are scored independently.</u> Allow 360 m s^{-1} to 365 m s^{-1} tolerance. Intermediate value of mass does not need to be calculated for the C1 mark, but seeing this value implies the C1 mark.
	$E_K = ½ mv^2$	**C1**	Allow KE, $E_{(K)}$, E, for kinetic energy Allow $½ mv^2$ without a subject
	$= ½ \times 1.63 \times 10^6 \times 362^2$ kinetic energy $= 1.1 \times 10^{11}$ J	**A1**	

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Question	Answer	Marks	Guidance
1(b)(v)	(height =) area (under graph)	**B1**	Note: this is a B1 mark, so statement must be seen (this may be in the working space or on the graph). Allow 'distance / displacement' for height Note: candidates may attempt to use a method involving SUVAT equations of uniformly accelerated motion, but they must explicitly state that they are determining an area in order to score the B1 mark. Allow '*A* under the graph' for 'area', but do not credit just '*A*', or *A* in the context of an equation (e.g. not just $A = ½\ b \times h$).
	e.g. counting squares height $= 32 \times 50 \times 5$ $= 8000$ m	**A1**	Allow any answer that, when rounded to 1 significant figure, is in the range 7000 m to 9000 m.
1(c)	$F = (\Delta)p\ /\ (\Delta)t$ or $T = (m / t) \times v$	**C1**	Allow $F=\Delta(mv) / (\Delta)t$, but ignore just $F=ma$ ECF of force from **(b)(iii)**.
	speed $= (3.5 \times 10^7) / (2.0 \times 10^4)$ $= 1800$ m s^{-1}	**A1**	Allow 1700 m s^{-1} (arises from full SF carry forward from **(b)(iii)**) Note: answers that round to either 350 m s^{-1} or 360 m s^{-1} (depending on the SF carried forward in the calculation) may arise from using $T = 7.1 \times 10^6$ N (a common wrong answer to **(b)(iii)**). This can gain 2 / 2 with ECF from **(b)(iii)**, if the working is correct.
1(d)	acceleration: same	**B1**	Allow other methods of indication, e.g. cross provided no ticks seen.
	kinetic energy: less	**B1**	

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Question	Answer	Marks	Guidance
2(a)	force per unit extension	**B1**	Allow 'ratio of force to extension' Allow 'ratio of force and extension' Allow 'ratio between force and extension' Allow 'force ÷ extension' Allow 'force over extension' (BOD) Allow 'force per extension' Allow 'change in force' for force (BOD) Allow 'change in length' or 'compression' for extension Allow 'change in extension' for extension (BOD) Ignore 'stiffness' Ignore any units
2(b)(i)	parallax error / spring moves	**B1**	List Rules apply. Allow a description of parallax error, e.g. 'not reading the ruler at eye level'
2(b)(ii)	$k = (0.086 \times 9.81) / 0.026$	**C1**	Treat $g = 10$ as a TE (gives ECF answer 33 N m^{-1}).
	$= 32\ \text{N m}^{-1}$	**A1**	

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Question	Answer	Marks	Guidance
2(b)(iii)	(elastic potential energy =) $\frac{1}{2}Fx$	**C1**	Allow e, ΔL, Δx for x (but not just L) throughout
	$= \frac{1}{2} \times 0.086 \times 9.81 \times 0.026 = 0.011$ (J)	**A1**	Full substitution and answer needed. Allow sight of just '0.84' for '0.086×9.81' (BOD) (since $0.086 \times 9.81 = 0.84366$)
	(elastic potential energy =) $\frac{1}{2}kx^2$	(C1)	ECF of k from **(b)(ii)** if value still gives 0.011 J.
	OR $= \frac{1}{2} \times 32 \times 0.026^2 = 0.011$ (J)	(A1)	
	OR (elastic potential energy =) $\frac{1}{2}F^2 / k$	(C1)	
	$= \frac{1}{2} \times (0.086 \times 9.81)^2 / 32 = 0.011$ J	(A1)	
2(b)(iv)	(elastic potential energy at release) $= \frac{1}{2} \times 32 \times (0.026 + 0.015)^2$ $= 0.027$ J	**C1**	ECF of k from **(b)(ii)**. Use of $\frac{1}{2}Fx = \frac{1}{2} \times 0.086 \times 9.81 \times (0.026 + 0.015)$ is XP. Candidates may use $F = kx$ to calculate the force that produces the new extension and then substitute into $E = \frac{1}{2}Fx$ to find the EPE at release, to gain the C1 mark.
	additional elastic potential energy $= 0.027 - 0.011$ $= 0.016$ J	**A1**	

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Question	Answer	Marks	Guidance
2(b)(v)	change in GPE… $(\Delta)E_{(P)}$ = 0.086 × 9.81 × 0.015 = 0.013 J kinetic energy = additional EPE – change in GPE	**C1**	This mark is for the substitution of values (which can be implied by the intermediate answer of $(\Delta)E_{(P)}$ = 0.013 J). Allow GPE, E, $mg(\Delta)h$ for gain in $(\Delta)E_{(P)}$
	kinetic energy = 0.016 – 0.013 = 0.003 J	**A1**	ECF of EPE from **(b)(iv)** provided **(b)(iv)** > 0.013 J. Difference of two 2SF numbers so only 1SF required. Allow an answer that rounds to 0.004 J to 1 SF (full carry forward of SF from earlier parts).
2(c)	(some) energy used for plastic deformation	**B1**	Allow 'work' for energy Allow 'permanent' for plastic Allow a valid description for 'plastic deformation', e.g. '(the spring) doesn't return to its original length (when the applied force is removed)' – allow 'unstretched' / 'initial' for original; – allow 'shape and size' / 'dimensions' for length; – ignore 'state' / 'form' for length. Allow 'energy is transferred as thermal energy' (BOD) Allow 'energy is lost as heat' (BOD) Ignore any reference to a change in k
	(so additional elastic potential energy is) less	**B1**	Allow 'decreases' for 'is less'

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Question	Answer	Marks	Guidance
3(a)	(a wave that) transfers energy (in the direction of propagation)	**B1**	Allow 'propagates / transports / carries / moves' for 'transfers' Allow 'it' to mean 'a wave' unless it is clearly referring to something else Ignore reference to transverse / longitudinal waves (BOD) Ignore references to 'transfer of matter'
3(b)(i)	$v = \lambda / T$ or $v = f\lambda$ and $T = 1 / f$	**C1**	Allow c for v Allow lower / uppercase letters: t for T, F for f (BOD) Allow 18 / 75 = 0.24 s to imply the C1 mark
	$T = (36 / 2) / 75 = 0.24$ s	**A1**	Full substitution and answer needed. The halving of 36 to get λ must be clear Allow any POT conversion in 36 and 75, provided consistent.
3(b)(ii)	2 cycles of a sinusoidal (shape) curve between $t = 0$ to $t = 0.48$ s	**B1**	Ignore anything drawn after $t = 0.48$ s. Allow a triangular wave shape (BOD)
	Amplitude (of wave) consistently shown as 12 cm	**B1**	Allow ± ½ small square tolerance vertically.
	correct phase, with zero displacement at 0, 0.12, 0.24, 0.36 and 0.48 s, troughs at 0.06 and 0.30 s, and peaks at 0.18 and 0.42 s	**B1**	(Expecting to see a negative sine wave) Allow ± 1 small square tolerance horizontally.

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Question	Answer	Marks	Guidance
3(c)(i)	wave reflects at Q / wall	**B1**	Allow P for Q, and 'end / side' for 'wall' Ignore 'rebounds / bounces back' for 'reflects'
	incident and reflected waves superpose	**B1**	Allow 'wave from P / initial / original wave' for 'incident wave' Allow 'two waves travelling in opposite directions' for 'incident and reflected waves' (BOD), but ignore just 'different directions' Allow 'overlap / superimpose / interfere / combine' for 'superpose' Allow 'destructive/constructive interference' to imply 'superpose' Ignore 'meet / interact / collide / coincide / intersect' Ignore reference to phase difference Ignore reference to coherence
3(c)(ii)	sinusoidal shape with nodes at P and Q	**M1**	Allow a half wavelength from P to Q (i.e. allow a single smooth curve from P to Q, wholly above or below the dashed line), with nodes at P and Q Ignore amplitude Ignore a second correct solid or dashed line
	curve crosses the dashed line 4 times between P and Q	**A1**	

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Question	Answer	Marks	Guidance
3(c)(iii)	cross labelled N at one of the intersections of the dashed line with their solid line	**B1**	For both marks allow crosses vertically in line with correct positions. Allow dots (instead of crosses) if they are clearly labelled Allow at P or Q.
	cross labelled A at one of their peaks or troughs	**B1**	If line drawn in **(c)(ii)** is a straight line, or no line drawn, allow these marks if the crosses are in the correct positions (i.e. to the nearest cm: N at 0 / 2 / 4 / 6 / 8 / 10 cm; A at 1 / 3 / 5 / 7 / 9 cm) If more than one N or A marked, treat as CON if incorrect. <u>Special case:</u> If both crosses in correct positions but A and N swapped, allow 1/2.

Question	Answer	Marks	Guidance
4(a)	potential difference per unit current	**B1**	Allow 'p.d.' or 'voltage' for 'potential difference'. Allow 'potential difference ÷ current' Allow 'ratio of potential difference to current' Allow 'ratio of potential difference and current' Allow 'p.d. over current' (BOD) Allow 'p.d. per current' Allow 'ratio between p.d. and current' Ignore symbols unless they are defined. Ignore references to units. Ignore 'opposition to current / flow of charge' Not 'current intensity' for 'current'
4(b)(i)	$(A =) \pi \times (½ \times 0.60 \times 10^{-3})^2 = 2.8 \times 10^{-7}$ (m^2)	**A1**	Full substitution and answer needed. Allow just '0.30×10^{-3}' for '$½ \times 0.60 \times 10^{-3}$' (BOD)

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Question	Answer	Marks	Guidance
4(b)(ii)	$R = \rho L / A$	**C1**	A valid calculation that uses any value of ρ from 1.5×10^{-8} to 2.4×10^{-8} can imply the symbol equation for the C1 mark.
	$= (1.7 \times 10^{-8} \times 2.0) / (2.8 \times 10^{-7})$ $= 0.12\,\Omega$	**A1**	
4(b)(iii)	(resistance and diameter/cross-sectional area same so) resistivity is lower	**B1**	Allow ρ for resistivity Allow ↓ for decreases and ↑ for increases (BOD)
	(so temperature is) less (than 20 °C)	**B1**	Allow T or θ for temperature Allow 'it' to mean 'temperature' unless it is clearly referring to something else Ignore just 'temperature decreases' (as we are looking for the comparison with 20 °C)
4(b)(iv)	resistance (of thermistor) decreases with (increasing) temperature	**B1**	List Rules apply. Allow ↓ for decreases and ↑ for increases Allow R for resistance, and T or θ for temperature Allow 'resistance is inversely proportional to temperature' Allow 'resistance of copper increases with temperature' Ignore 'thermistor has negative correlation' Ignore 'opposite relationship/correlation/gradient' Ignore any reference to Ohm's law
4(c)(i)	K^{-1}	**B1**	Allow °C^{-1} (But not C^{-1}) Allow 1/K or 1/°C Not C°$^{-1}$ / °C^{-}

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Question	Answer	Marks	Guidance
4(c)(ii)	α = (candidate's ρ – 1.57) / (1.57 × candidate's corresponding $\Delta\theta$) e.g. α = (2.37 – 1.57) / (1.57 × 120)	**C1**	Allow anything in range 1.5 to 1.6 for '1.57'. Any correct and consistent values of ρ and $\Delta\theta$ can be accepted, provided they fall within the range of the graph grid. Ignore any POT errors for the C1 mark.
	= 0.0042	**A1**	Allow any answer that rounds to 4×10^{-3} or 5×10^{-3} to 1SF to score 2 / 2 Ignore any units on the answer line
4(d)	$I = Anvq$ $5.6 = 2.8 \times 10^{-7} \times 8.5 \times 10^{28} \times v \times 1.6 \times 10^{-19}$	**C1**	No mark for only copying equation from Formulae Sheet
	$v = 1.5 \times 10^{-3}$ m s^{-1}	**A1**	No ECF of A from **(b)(i)**.

Question	Answer	Marks	Guidance
5(a)	three quarks	**B1**	Allow 'three antiquarks' Allow 'q q q' or '$\bar{q}$ $\bar{q}$ $\bar{q}$' Ignore specific quark combinations (ignore 'uds', 'uud', etc.)

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<table>
<tr><th>Question</th><th>Answer</th><th>Marks</th><th>Guidance</th></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="2">5(b)(i)</td><td>(quark charges are) (+)⅔(e) and (+)⅓(e)</td><td>B1</td><td>Not e^- for e</td></tr>
<tr><td><u>quark</u> has charge (+)⅔(e) and <u>anti-quark</u> has charge (+)⅓(e)</td><td>B2</td><td>Allow symbols (e.g. ‘q’ for quark, ‘$\bar{q}$’ for anti-quark, ‘u’ for up,
‘$\bar{d}$’ for antidown, etc.)
If ‘quark and antiquark’ is stated separately from the charges (+)⅔(e) and (+)⅓(e), then allow the 2nd B1 mark to be scored if the order of the charges matches the order of the quarks (BOD).
Allow in terms of specific quarks with their correct charges, e.g. ‘up quark has charge +2 / 3, anti-down as charge +1 / 3’
Allow any pairing of a quark (from the left-hand column) with an antiquark (from the right-hand column) from the table below, with their respective charges:
<table><tr><th>quark</th><th>charge</th><th>antiquark</th><th>charge</th></tr><tr><td>up / u</td><td>(+)⅔(e)</td><td>anti-down / $\bar{d}$</td><td>(+)⅓(e)</td></tr><tr><td>charm / c</td><td>(+)⅔(e)</td><td>anti-strange / $\bar{s}$</td><td>(+)⅓(e)</td></tr><tr><td>top / t</td><td>(+)⅔(e)</td><td>anti-bottom / $\bar{b}$</td><td>(+)⅓(e)</td></tr></table>
Do not allow ‘– (–)’ to represent ‘+’ (for charge on an antiquark)</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="2">5(b)(ii)</td><td>either : (+)⅔(e) –⅔(e) gives overall charge 0
or : –⅓(e) (+)⅓(e) gives overall charge 0</td><td>B1</td><td>Not e^- for e, but ignore if already penalised in (b)(i) to allow the B1 marks to be scored.</td></tr>
<tr><td>–⅓(e) –⅔(e) gives overall charge –1(e)</td><td>B1</td><td>Do not allow ‘– (–)’ to represent ‘+’ (for charge on an antiquark), but ignore if already penalised in (b)(i) to allow the B1 marks to be scored.</td></tr>
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Question	Answer	Marks	Guidance
5(c)	any two from: • electron • positron • neutrino • antineutrino	**B2**	List Rules apply. Allow any two, from different bullet-points in this list: • electron / beta-minus particle • positron / beta-plus particle / antielectron (BOD) • neutrino • antineutrino • muon • antimuon • tau / tauon • antitau / antitauon Allow just 'beta-particle' to gain a B1 mark for electron / positron, but to gain a second B1 mark a different lepton must be named (i.e. something other than electron / beta-minus particle / positron / antielectron / beta-plus particle). Treat any one of the following bullet-points as two correct answers (BOD): • electron neutrino • electron antineutrino • antielectron neutrino • muon neutrino • muon antineutrino • antimuon neutrino • tau(on) neutrino • tau(on) antineutrino • antitau(on) neutrino i.e. any of these scores 2/2, even if written on the same line (ignore any hyphenation between words) Ignore any symbols (e.g. ignore just e^-, ν_e, etc.) Allow misspelling if is phonetically similar to the correct term Do not allow a misspelling if it is ambiguously similar to an incorrect term (e.g. not 'neutrion' for 'neutrino', as it is too similar to 'neutron').

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Question	Answer	Marks	Guidance
5(d)	*either* : leptons are fundamental particles (and mesons are not) *or* : mesons are made from quarks (and leptons are not)	**B1**	List Rules apply. Allow reverse reasoning throughout. Allow 'elementary' for 'fundamental' Allow 'leptons have different masses (than mesons)'. Allow 'mesons have an internal structure / made of smaller particles / can be broken down' Allow 'leptons have different spins (than mesons)'. Allow 'mesons are hadrons' Allow 'mesons experience the strong (nuclear) force (and leptons do not)' Allow 'mesons are bosons' Allow 'leptons are fermions' Ignore specific named leptons or mesons Ignore 'leptons have smaller / larger mass(es) than mesons'

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