MARK SCHEMES IN KNOWLEDGE-BASED QUALIFICATIONS: A GOOD PRACTICE GUIDE
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Introduction

About the Guide

This Guide takes the user through the main decisions needed when designing a mark scheme and during the process of mark scheme development. It includes information about the key factors that should be considered when making decisions and provides examples. Finally, it includes checklists that could be used at the end of the process to support awarding bodies as they consider if the resulting mark schemes are effective.

This Mark Scheme Guide is not a regulatory document. It deals with some common high level issues relating to mark scheme development, based on a review of the literature currently available about mark schemes. We are not advocating a ‘one size fits all’ approach to developing mark schemes – awarding bodies should consider the Guide in the context of their own qualifications and processes.

We recognise that there is an intimate connection between item development and mark scheme development. This Guide focuses on the mark scheme, and although there are some references to items, it does not look in detail at the principles of good item writing.

Audience

This Guide is designed for those developing and evaluating mark schemes for knowledge-based qualifications, although many of the principles apply to mark schemes more broadly.

Purpose

The purpose of this Guide is to support qualifications developers when designing, developing and reviewing mark schemes. It can be used to inform decisions during the design phase, and can be used at the end of the process to support awarding bodies as they consider if the resulting mark scheme is based on evidence-informed principles of effective mark scheme development.

An awarding body shouldn’t use this Guide in place of its own development process; we encourage awarding bodies to view this Guide as a resource that can complement and support individual awarding bodies’ development processes.

Structure of the Guide

The diagram on the next page provides a visual overview of the structure of the Guide. Each box in the diagram is linked to content in the following sections of the Guide. The following sections then take the user through a series of key decisions, gradually taking the user through the design principles and key considerations in the development of the required mark scheme. The Guide can be printed out and used in hard copy but is more effective as an online tool, where the dynamic links take the user to the logical next section. Use the ‘back’ button on each page to return to your previous page view.

This document has been optimised for viewing as a PDF. You can get Adobe Reader on the following link: https://get.adobe.com/uk/reader/

This Guide was developed for Qualifications Wales by AlphaPlus Consultancy Ltd in September 2018, and was published in February 2019.
This content map is an alternative to the table of contents and each block is clickable to provide a direct link to the relevant content.

The map shows all the content in the document diagrammatically, providing the hierarchy of the content and how it all relates to each other. The map clearly shows the difference in complexity when developing a simple controlled mark scheme or a more complicated constructed mark scheme. It also shows how the issues to be considered when developing constructed mark schemes increase as the number of marks increase.

Further Detail
- Principles of points-based mark schemes
- Levels of response mark schemes
- Indicative content
- Extended writing

Further Considerations
- Subject-specific issues
- E-marking

Holistic mark scheme
Analytical mark scheme
Examples
Checklist
Some key first principles

The following are principles which apply to all marking and mark scheme development.

1. Marking should be positive: that is, candidates should be rewarded for what they know, rather than what they do not know.

2. As far as possible, the candidate should not be repeatedly penalised for the same mistake.

3. The relationship between the item and the mark scheme should be transparent and logical. Both should be based on a clear, explicit statement of what the item is intended to assess (see page 6).

4. The item and mark scheme should assess what they are intended to assess and nothing else, i.e. credit should not be given for irrelevant content or skills (see page 7).

5. The candidate should not be expected to guess what is in the examiner’s mind. Items should be made as clear and simple as possible and it is in the mark scheme where complexity or sophistication can be rewarded.

6. Technical terms should be used as set out in the specification and the remaining text should be clear and simple. The use of technically appropriate vocabulary in the mark scheme should be rewarded as appropriate to the purpose of the item.

7. When marking, markers generally use five strategies:
   1. matching
   2. scanning
   3. evaluating
   4. scrutinising
   5. scanning for no response (see page 8).

8. Hurdles, whereby access to higher marks is limited by features not explicitly called for in the item, should be avoided (see page 9).

9. Reliable marking, except in controlled response items, will always rely on the professionalism of the marker to some extent and the mark scheme should be designed to account for this (see page 10).
A clear, explicit statement of what the item is intended to assess

It is of major importance that each item in an examination has a specific role in assessing the overall construct (the nature of the subject as captured by its aims and assessment objectives). It is only by doing this that it is possible to ensure that the examination as a whole does assess the construct and with the overall balance/weight that is intended.

However, this is not as onerous a task as it might seem. For a single-mark item, it may require no more than identifying the particular element in the specification that the item is testing. There is an additional requirement here in that this information should be recorded – a grid is an effective method for such items – so that it is easy to check both that a particular examination does test the required breadth and depth across the specification and that, over time, the overall coverage of the specification is thorough.

For an item requiring an extended piece of writing, it is probable that the specification itself defines the range of skills being tested and their weighting, while the nature of the knowledge being tested is demonstrated by any indicative content. What is required here, therefore, is simply vigilance that the wording of the question is really going to help focus the candidate on demonstrating the necessary skills.

It is only for the low- to middle-fee items that the process is more demanding, but it repays the effort in terms of producing an effective mark scheme. These items are generally used to assess several related elements from an area of the specification to ensure that it is tested thoroughly. A clear statement that this is the purpose makes it much easier to Guide the marker in evaluating the range of responses and to monitor coverage both within and across examination series.

For an item that involves judgement of the quality of an answer, which will usually involve the use of a levels of response mark scheme, the task is slightly more demanding. It is essentially a three-part process. First, it is important to be clear about the qualities being sought. (This may well be clear in the specification, in which case what is needed is to check that this is true for the particular item.) Second, it is necessary to ensure that the level descriptors do reward the desired qualities in clearly defined steps. Third, it is vital that the wording of the item is such that the candidate is led to demonstrate those qualities and only those in their response.

* Words which are in blue and underlined in the Guide appear in the Glossary.
Construct irrelevance

Part of the value in having a clear statement of the purpose of an item, component or subject is that it defines the construct being assessed. This then enables a check that no part of the mark scheme is rewarding qualities that do not form part of that purpose. At a simple level it ensures that the command word in the item matches the expectations of the mark scheme. For example, an item asking for a description should not reward explanations (even though it can be argued this is a higher-level response).

The assessment of modern foreign languages presents an important case-history here. The four different language skills of speaking, listening, reading and writing are assessed separately at GCSE. In order to achieve this without introducing construct irrelevance, the assessment must minimise the need for candidates to use skills other than the one being tested: the reading test should not require speaking, listening or writing and so on. This tends to be achieved by the use of controlled response items and only requiring the use of the target language for speaking and writing.

There is a further important example in this context. It is the assessment of spelling, punctuation and grammar or quality of language. If a qualification covers these skills either as a separate assessment objective or within one, there is no problem. Otherwise these skills are not really part of the construct and any requirement to assess them is best addressed as a separate element.
Marking strategies

Research has identified five strategies which markers use when arriving at a decision: matching, scanning, evaluating, scrutinising and scanning for no response. On any given occasion, a marker may employ any or all of these but, in general, different strategies are more suitable for evaluating different types of response. Consequently, mark schemes which activate all or most of the strategies are at risk of creating error.

When evaluating a largely factual response (whether a single-mark item or a multi-mark points-based one), the primary strategies are matching and scanning for no response. That is, the marker seeks to match the answer to the range given in the mark scheme or to confirm that no relevant response is given. If this proves difficult, scrutinising may be needed to clarify whether differences in the candidate’s response can also be considered correct in terms of the intention of the item. Where possible, the item and mark scheme are best structured to support these strategies.

However, in assessing an extended piece of writing, the marker will be scanning and evaluating the material, again scrutinising wherever a point’s accuracy or relevance seems in doubt. (If a candidate’s answer seems to go completely off the point, the no-response strategy will be activated, but the marker will continue scanning and evaluating the whole answer for relevant material.) The scanning and evaluating will be primarily against the performance descriptors, but the indicative content performs a critical role in helping the marker contextualise the work. In particular, it is a key element in guarding against prepared material, which is why the indicative content must itself be specific and strongly related to the question asked.
Hurdles

There is widespread consensus that the introduction of hurdles is undesirable in knowledge-based assessment. This could lead to anomalies in results and could also adversely affect teaching and learning. It is important, therefore, to guard against the use of hurdles within a mark scheme and to note that they can sometimes be introduced unintentionally and by implication only.

Hurdles are found most commonly in levels of response mark schemes. (An item asking for two examples and an explanation for each may legitimately award credit separately for each example and each explanation.)

One example is a level descriptor including an idea like “three examples needed for level three or above” where answers offering two very central and well-amplified examples will receive less credit than one which happens to meet the three example criteria, or attempting to avoid this may lead to a general lowering of the marks.

Perhaps the most common implicit hurdle in levels of response mark schemes arises from a comment like “Answers at this level [one of the higher ones] will include evaluation.” Evaluation is certainly a higher-order skill but it can also take very rudimentary forms, and the apparent implication that the presence of evaluation places a response into a higher level can have major effects on marking accuracy and on teachers’ understanding of the marking process.

There is a specific example in the assessment of modern foreign languages. Here, high performance in the language requires the use of “a range of tenses”. “Range” tends to be defined as three or more (reasonably enough in semantic terms). This requirement can, however, lead to some high quality answers which may, by their nature, only use two tenses being given a lower level than a lower quality response that includes three tenses. The existence of this requirement can lead to unnatural writing, designed simply to get over the ‘hurdle’.
Professionalism

One idea behind providing a clear statement of what any item is assessing is that it actively involves the professionalism of the marker. (This applies even where the item is a single-mark question marked by clerical markers: even though the mark scheme will aim to provide as complete a list of what is acceptable or unacceptable, it helps if the markers are able to understand why.)

As a result, the most effective mark schemes find a balance between trusting the professionalism of the marker and providing detailed guidance. Two undesirable consequences are likely to arise from increasing the amount of detail in a mark scheme in an attempt to make it comprehensive. The first is that it becomes very complex and cluttered, making it increasingly difficult for the marker to understand and internalise sufficiently to apply quickly but accurately. The second is that the marker sees the task as being almost entirely automatic, rather than involving the active use of professional judgement. Both are likely to lead to marker error.

A mark scheme which does not make clear the underlying principle behind the award of credit will inevitably have to rely on comprehensiveness, and thus be likely to reduce marking accuracy. Conversely, it is important to provide sufficient guidance, and mark schemes which use wording such as “1 mark for each suitable example” are particularly unhelpful. They also completely fail in the secondary task of a mark scheme in communicating with the users of the qualification.
What type of mark scheme to use

Are the items (questions) controlled response (e.g. multiple choice) or constructed response (where the candidates write/input their response)?

**CONTROLLED**

When using a controlled response item type, there is still an implicit mark scheme in the form of the distractors: we are all familiar with the competition questions on television, where the distractors tend to be absurd, so the question is not really testing anything.

When writing a controlled response item, make sure that the mark scheme is focussed on the knowledge and the skills that the item is intended to assess.

For mark schemes where there is a selected response from a limited list, e.g. for True/False questions or for multiple choice questions, ensure that the proportion of each response is approximately equivalent. Too many of a single response can lead candidates to question their answers. It is also important that the answers do not follow a predictable pattern.

**CONSTRUCTED**

A constructed response mark scheme can vary widely in its scope. The number of marks being awarded will impact on the design of the mark scheme.

Guidance for each band can be found on the following pages:

**How many marks does the item have?**

- 1
- 2-5
- 6-10
- > 10

*For all mark scheme types refer to the General Assessment Checklist and the checklist for that specific mark scheme type.*

Controlled example
Go to page 34

General mark scheme checklist*
Go to page 51

Controlled response checklist
Go to page 53
1 Mark

Whether controlled response or constructed response, 1 mark items are usually used to test a particular piece of knowledge or the product of a simple calculation. They can be more or less difficult, but because they carry only one mark, they should test only one target at a time.

Such items are usually marked by a process of the marker matching the candidate’s answer to that in the mark scheme or identifying no response.

Go to page 8 marking strategies

The aim of the mark scheme is therefore to make that process as error-free as possible. The main sources of error are:

- a lack of clarity about the main focus of the item; too many possible answers
- too many restrictions and/or qualifications
- and poor layout.

Following the process on the following pages should help reduce the risks.
SELECTING THE TYPE OF MARK SCHEME TO USE

1 MARK

Have you provided a clear statement of the target knowledge/skill for the item?

Yes | No
---|---
Please create one, clearly rooted in the assessment objectives
Go to page 6

Is there a clear single correct answer (not necessarily one word) or a small number of clear valid alternatives?

Yes | No
---|---
Can the item be worded so that there is? If no, is this the right type of item for the target knowledge/skill?

Is there an allowable level of tolerance to the response? (For example, degree of numerical accuracy, or different forms such as word or numerical.)

Yes | No
---|---
If no, go to next item

Does the item make this sufficiently clear?

Yes | No
---|---
If no, review the wording of the item to see if it possible

Is the level of tolerance clear in the mark scheme?

Yes | No
---|---
If no, add this to the mark scheme

Does the mark scheme make clear the principles behind what makes a response acceptable or unacceptable or give a full list of both?

Yes | No
---|---
If no, add this to the mark scheme

Has this process led to a complex and cluttered mark scheme?

Yes | No
---|---
Proceed to next item

Review the item to see if the outcome space can be better controlled, e.g., specify the tolerance, make clear the desired form of the answer. Then review the mark scheme and repeat the evaluation process. N.B. If you have made any change to the item, you must go through the whole process, adjusting the mark scheme to reflect any change.

Example of 1 mark mark scheme
Go to page 35

General mark scheme checklist
Go to page 51

1 mark mark scheme checklist
Go to page 54
2-5 Marks

This is probably the most common tariff in GCSE examinations and is common at A level. It is used in items asking for:

- several examples of a phenomenon
- an example with some development
- a definition
- a description
- a straightforward explanation
- Or a focused piece of inference.

N.B These items raise issues of how to treat responses which involve a scatter-gun approach, where candidates set down everything they can remember about a topic, or which may include material which clearly shows the candidate doesn’t understand the topic alongside relevant material.

Have you provided a clear statement of the target knowledge/skill for the item?

Yes  No  

Please create one, clearly rooted in the assessment objectives  

Go to page 6

Does the item call for a series of points or examples?

Yes  No

Series of points

Go to guidance on points-based mark scheme page 15

Are some or all of the marks available to be awarded for the quality of response

Yes  No

No. i.e. all the marks are awarded for specific items of knowledge/detail. This is really a point-based multi-mark item  

Go to page 15

Go to guidance on page 16
Points-based mark scheme

In many ways this can be treated as a series of linked one-mark items. Ideally, set the item out to assist with this, e.g. with discrete space provided for each point/example. The use of clearly delineated space for each part of the answer will assist the marker with the task of matching each response to the mark scheme and identifying where there is no response. Go to page 8 marking strategies

However the item is laid out, the mark scheme will still need to be presented differently from one for a single mark item and, in particular, it will have to be more complex.

Is there a clear list of acceptable points? Are some of the acceptable answers alternatives, so that only one carries credit? Are these clearly specified?

Yes  No  If no, add this to the mark scheme

Is the total number of acceptable points (i.e. excluding alternatives) slightly larger than the number of marks available?

Yes  No  If it is much larger, review the item to see if the outcome space can be better controlled e.g. a tighter focus in the wording so that fewer acceptable answers are possible.

This type of mark scheme works well if the available correct answers are equal to or slightly greater than the number of marks available. It needs to be clear what happens if the candidate provides more answers than required, including if the additional answers are correct, irrelevant or incorrect. This is particularly important if incorrect answers suggest that the candidate does not understand the concept being assessed.

Has this process led to a complex and cluttered mark scheme?

Yes  No  Proceed to next item

If yes, it is necessary to engage in a dynamic process involving adjusting the item to limit the complexity of possible responses; and adjusting the mark scheme to ensure it is as clear as possible. N.B It is important (and helpful) to include the item’s target knowledge/skills at all stages of this process; it may be that further clarification of the underlying principle of the item will reduce the need for the complex detail.

Examples of 2-5 mark mark schemes
Go to pages 36-40

General mark scheme checklist
Go to page 51

2-5 mark scheme checklists
Go to pages 54-55
Some or all of the marks awarded for quality of response

If there are marks to be awarded for content as well as quality within an item, it is advisable that the distinction between content marks and quality marks is clear and that the content marks are awarded according to the principles of points-based marking. This is because marking points-based items largely calls for matching, scanning and scanning for no response, while marking for quality requires scanning, scrutinising and evaluating.

Where the distinction between content marks and quality marks is not clear, marker errors are more likely.

Go to page 8 marking strategies

Does the mark scheme describe clearly distinct sets of qualities that characterise different levels of response related to the target skill?
i.e. there need to be two or at most three descriptions related to quality not content, and they must be clearly distinguishable in terms of the natural language used.

Go to pages 26-27 for guidance on levels of response mark schemes

Yes  No  Add this to the mark scheme

Has this process led to a complex and cluttered mark scheme?

Yes  No  Proceed to next item

If yes, it is necessary to engage in a dynamic process involving adjusting the item to limit the complexity of possible responses; and adjusting the mark scheme to ensure it is as clear as possible. N.B It is important (and helpful) to include the item’s target knowledge/skills at all stages of this process: it may be that further clarification of the underlying principle of the item will reduce the need for the complex detail.

Go to pages 36-40

Examples of 2-5 mark mark schemes

Go to page 51

General mark scheme checklist

Go to page 55

2-5 mark levels of response markschemes checklists
6-10 Marks

Items in this sort of mark range may require candidates to describe or explain a relatively complex process or to provide some targeted inference, analysis or evaluation. They also can be used to break up a more extended piece of writing under a series of foci, for example looking at two stimuli separately and then comparing or contrasting them.

Have you provided a clear statement of the target knowledge/skill for the item?

Yes  No  
Please create one, clearly rooted in the assessment objectives

Go to page 6

How are the marks to be allocated?

| All through specific pieces of knowledge | A mixture of specific points and quality of argument | All through quality of argument |
All through specific pieces of knowledge | A mixture of specific points and quality of argument | All through quality of argument

Is this an appropriate way to evaluate the specified target knowledge/skills?

Yes | No
If no, consider one of the other approaches

All the principles of a points-based mark scheme apply here.
However, the greater the number of points, the harder the process of matching and identifying no response becomes. This is particularly the case if there are some points to be rewarded straightforwardly and others which are alternatives. This is even more true if there are points which show a significant failure of understanding by the candidate and need a particular approach to marking.

The mark scheme will quickly become complex and cluttered.

Is it possible to sub-divide the item into two or more lower-tariff points-based items?

No | Yes
Go to page 14 on 2-5 mark mark schemes

The task is to make the matching process as straightforward as possible. This is greatly assisted if the rationale for the item (the target) is clear, since it will almost certainly be impossible to capture the full range of variants on the rewardable and non-rewardable responses (the outcome space), and even less possible to do so while keeping the mark scheme clear.

It may well be that there needs to be an iterative process, where the wording of the item is revised and tightened so that the outcome space becomes more and more clearly defined. In the end, provided the purpose of the item is clear and the exemplification sufficiently well-chosen to illustrate that purpose, it may be necessary to rely on the professionalism of the markers.

Go to page 25 for guidance on points-based mark schemes
Go to page 10 for guidance on professionalism
Examples of 6-10 mark mark schemes
Go to pages 41-45
General mark scheme checklist
Go to page 51
6-10 mark mark scheme checklists
Go to pages 54-55
N.B. The division between content, point-based marks and quality marks must be clear and the content marks awarded according to the principles of points-based marking.

Marking points-based items primarily involves matching and no response strategies, while marking for quality requires scanning, scrutinising and evaluating. Mixing the two strategy sets makes error more likely. It is therefore advisable that the two sets of marks are awarded separately.

Go to page 25 for guidance on points-based mark schemes

Does the mark scheme describe clearly distinct sets of qualities that characterise different levels of response in terms of the target skills? i.e. there need to be two or three descriptions (depending on the total marks) related to quality not content, and they must be clearly distinguishable in terms of the natural language used.

Go to pages 26-27 for guidance on levels of response mark schemes

Examples of 6-10 mark mark schemes
Go to pages 41-45

General mark scheme checklist
Go to page 51

6-10 mark mark scheme checklists
Go to pages 54-55
i.e. there need to be two or three descriptions (depending on the total marks) related to quality not content, and they must be clearly distinguishable in terms of the natural language used.

Go to pages 26-27 for guidance on levels of response mark schemes

Examples of 6-10 mark mark schemes
Go to pages 41-45

General mark scheme checklist
Go to page 51

6-10 mark mark scheme checklists
Go to pages 54-55
More than 10 marks

Items in this mark range may require a lengthy description of a process, where each stage carries credit. In such cases, it should be recognised that the possibilities of marker error are increased, as the mark scheme inevitably becomes more complex. This makes the scanning process much more demanding for the marker. It may be advisable to seek to subdivide the item to better control the outcome space.

More usually, these items call for extended writing and credit is awarded for higher order skills such as analysis, synthesis and evaluation as well as knowledge demonstrated by exemplification.

Go to page 29 for guidance on extended writing

These are marked by levels of response mark schemes with level descriptors capturing distinct progress within and across the skills, supported by indicative content. The exact balance of skills and expected knowledge will depend on the exact nature of the item.

Go to page 28 for guidance on indicative content

Go to pages 26-27 for guidance on levels of response mark schemes

Have you provided a clear statement of the target knowledge/skill for the item?

Yes  No

Please create one, clearly rooted in the assessment objectives

Go to page 6

How are the marks to be allocated?

All through specific pieces of knowledge  A mixture of specific points and quality of argument  All through quality of argument
How are the marks to be allocated?

- All through specific pieces of knowledge
- A mixture of specific points and quality of argument
- All through quality of argument

Is this an appropriate way to evaluate the specified target knowledge/skills?

Yes | No  → If no, consider one of the other approaches

All the principles of a points-based mark scheme apply here.
However, the greater the number of points, the harder the process of matching and identifying no response becomes. In fact, there is evidence that marking purely on a point by point basis becomes less reliable than using a levels of response approach in high tariff items. This is particularly the case if there are some points to be rewarded straightforwardly and others which are alternatives. This is even more true if there are points which show a significant failure of understanding by the candidate and need a particular approach to marking.

The mark scheme will quickly become complex and cluttered.

Is it possible to sub-divide the item into two or more lower-tariff points-based items?

No | Yes  → Go to page 14 on 2-5 mark mark schemes

The task is to make the matching process as straightforward as possible. This is greatly assisted if the rationale for the item (the target) is clear, since it will almost certainly be impossible to capture the full range of variants on the rewardable and non-rewardable responses (the outcome space), and even less possible to do so while keeping the mark scheme clear.

It may well be that there needs to be an iterative process, where the wording of the item is revised and tightened so that the outcome space becomes more and more clearly defined. In the end, provided the purpose of the item is clear and the exemplification sufficiently well-chosen to illustrate that purpose, it may be necessary to rely on the professionalism of the markers.

- Go to page 25 for guidance on points-based mark schemes
- Go to page 10 for guidance on professionalism
- Examples of >10 mark mark schemes. Go to pages 46-50
- General mark scheme checklist. Go to page 51
- >10 mark mark scheme checklists. Go to pages 54-55
How are the marks to be allocated?

| All through specific pieces of knowledge | A mixture of specific points and quality of argument | All through quality of argument |

N.B. The division between content, point-based marks and quality marks must be clear and the content marks awarded according to the principles of points-based marking.

Marking points-based items primarily involves matching and no response strategies, while marking for quality requires scanning, scrutinising and evaluating. Mixing the two strategy sets makes error more likely. It is therefore advisable that the two sets of marks are awarded separately.

**Go to page 25** for guidance on points based mark schemes

Does the mark scheme describe clearly distinct sets of qualities that characterise different levels of response in terms of the target skills? i.e. there need to be two or three descriptions (depending on the total marks) related to quality not content, and they must be clearly distinguishable in terms of the natural language used.

**Go to pages 26-27** for guidance on levels of response mark schemes

**Examples of >10 mark mark schemes. Go to pages 46-50**

**General mark scheme checklist. Go to page 51**

**>10 mark mark scheme checklists. Go to pages 54-55**
How are the marks to be allocated?

- All through specific pieces of knowledge
- A mixture of specific points and quality of argument
- All through quality of argument

There is a need to develop appropriate indicative content for each item calling for an extended response.

Go to page 28 for guidance on indicative content

Is the mark scheme holistic (i.e. requiring a single judgement against a single set of descriptions covering all the skills the item is intended to cover)?

Or analytical (i.e. requiring a series of judgements against descriptions covering each of a series of discrete skills – usually the assessment objectives)?

Go to page 26 for guidance on Holistic Mark Schemes

Go to page 27 for guidance on Analytic Mark Schemes

Examples of >10 mark mark schemes. Go to pages 46-50

General mark scheme checklist. Go to page 51

>10 mark mark scheme checklists. Go to pages 54-55
Principles of points-based mark schemes

These apply whatever mark tariff the item carries. It is harder to follow them when the tariff is high than for low-tariff items.

1. The key aim is clarity.
2. Provide a clear statement of the target of the item.
3. Layout can often help avoid error, for example using columns to identify different kinds of information. However, too many columns may increase confusion rather than reduce it.
4. Total number of marks must be the same as or slightly fewer than the number of possible acceptable answers. (For a single-mark item, a single correct answer is fine, but thought must be given to what level of variation is acceptable.)
5. The more marks available the less desirable it is for exact equivalence between marks available and number of acceptable answers.
6. Make sure all acceptable answers really are distinct.
7. Make sure it is clear what level of variation (e.g. in spelling) is acceptable.
8. Make sure it is clear if two answers are regarded as alternatives rather than additionally acceptable.
9. Make sure it is clear if any answers are unacceptable. (This is especially important if some answers are regarded as potentially negating correct material.)

Go to page 7 for guidance on irrelevant or incorrect content.
Levels of response mark schemes - holistic

Holistic marking, where a single judgement is made of the answer, tends to be less reliable than analytic marking, where separate marks are awarded for different elements of an answer. However, if the assessment is of a single assessment objective, there may be little alternative. It is almost inevitable for low-tariff levels of response mark schemes, but such items should be focused on a single skill or feature.

The task is to divide the total number of marks, taking into account the following principles:

1. As even a distribution of marks across the levels as possible. The total number of marks may make it impossible to make them exactly the same.
2. Balance the number of levels and the number of marks per level.
3. Use no more levels than it is possible to describe with clearly distinct and unambiguous descriptors. Experience suggests that natural language cannot go beyond five. Even with five, it is often difficult to avoid making either the top level unrealistically demanding or allowing the bottom one to require very little of the candidate for up to 20 per cent of the marks. It is wise to use the same number of levels in each strand. For low-tariff items, two or three levels is probably best.
4. Keep the number of marks in a level to a minimum provided you don’t have to increase the number of levels beyond what is manageable. Five is probably a maximum, three desirable.
5. Ensure that each level description covers the full range of skills being assessed, clearly and explicitly.
6. Do not rely wholly or largely on single terms (“limited”, “basic” “reasonable” etc) to characterise a level. This is particularly unhelpful where the chosen qualifier is then just applied to the targeted objectives.
7. Ensure that relevance is an explicit and significant requirement. (This is a combination of including it within the level descriptions and through focus in the indicative content.)
8. Avoid absolute language. “No” is permissible when characterising 0 marks; anything implying perfection (“all”, “complete”, “faultless” etc.) is both an unreasonable expectation of performance under examination conditions and likely to depress marks at the top end of the range.
Levels of response mark schemes - analytical

Given that analytical marking tends to be more reliable than holistic marking, it is important to make sure the mark scheme makes best use of its advantages, which lie primarily in the focus provided for each element in the assessment.

The task is to divide the total number of marks, taking into account the following principles:

1. Divide the total marks across the different strands or assessment objectives, to reflect any differences in weighting.

2. Create as even a distribution of marks across the levels within a strand as possible. The total number of marks may make it impossible to make these exactly the same.

3. Balance the number of levels and the number of marks per level.

4. Use no more levels than it is possible to describe with clearly distinct and unambiguous descriptors. Experience suggests that natural language cannot go beyond five. Even with five, it is often difficult to avoid making either the top level unrealistically demanding or allowing the bottom one to require very little of the candidate for up to 20 per cent of the marks. It is wise to use the same number of levels in each strand.

5. Keep the number of marks in a level to a minimum provided you don’t have to increase the number of levels beyond what is manageable. Five is probably a maximum, three desirable.

6. Ensure that all the level descriptors are clearly focussed on the specific strand they are covering, avoiding generalised descriptions.

7. Do not rely wholly or largely on single terms (“limited”, “basic” “reasonable” etc) to characterise a level. This is particularly unhelpful where the chosen qualifier is then just applied to the targeted objectives.

8. Ensure that relevance is an explicit requirement. (This is a combination of including it within the level descriptions and through focus in the indicative content.)

9. Avoid absolute language. “No” is permissible when characterising O marks; anything implying perfection (“all”, “complete”, “faultless” etc.) is both an unreasonable expectation of performance under examination conditions and likely to depress marks at the top end of the range.
Indicative content

Indicative content plays an important part in creating consistency of marking. First, it creates focus for the setter, helping to clarify exactly what the question is intended to do. The indicative content must seek to fulfil the following aims:

1. It should not aim to be comprehensive: it is “indicative” and providing very large quantities tends to obscure the target skills of the task.

2. It must be sufficient to make clear the nature of the task and tightly relevant to it. Note, if it is hard to produce clear and relevant indicative content, it is often a sign that the question is too vague, which may lead to predictable content.

3. It needs to be concise.

4. It must be specific to the item.

5. It should make clear the sort of information a task is intended to elicit or what is inappropriate.

6. For low-tariff items, it should be easy to outline the material worthy of credit and, as necessary, that not to be rewarded. The main Guidelines are that it needs to be clear, ideally built on a guiding principle, and that the number of possible responses is broadly in line with the number of marks available. For example, for a one-mark item, suggesting more than, say, 6 possible answers immediately raises the possibility that the item is not sufficiently focussed.

7. For tasks involving extended writing, a guiding principle needs to be the circumstances under which a response is produced: it is the work of a candidate working under examination conditions. There is no place for virtuoso displays of exemplification and cross-referencing, even though the very best answers may contain these.

8. It is also important for the indicative content for parallel tasks (where there is choice within a paper) to be broadly commensurate. A whole side of examples and pointers on one task against half-a-dozen or so bullets for another suggests there is something wrong with the assessment.

9. A good test of the indicative content is its specificity to the item. A real danger in setting identical questions on separate texts or topics (in itself, a dangerous practice: it does not guarantee comparability of demand) is that the indicative content fails to demonstrate precisely how the task applies to that specific topic. In fact, it is through creating the indicative content that any differences in demand can be exposed.

10. A final key point about the indicative content for high-tariff items is that it all needs to be clearly relevant. A danger of such items is that they can become predictable or at least be treated as invitations to set down everything the candidate knows about a particular topic. A guard against this is to make sure that the performance descriptors ensure that a central requirement is relevance to the actual task set. The indicative content must not undermine this requirement by providing generalised ideas.
Extended writing

Extended writing tasks can usefully be sub-divided, to ensure the level descriptors are focussed on the nature of the expected performance.

1  Purely creative tasks (for example creative writing, art and design)
   It is very difficult to produce indicative content for such tasks, given that the aim is to evoke an imaginative response. It is possible to emphasise relevance (although hard to define in this context) and part of the skill lies in creating a task that will resist being interpreted in over-familiar and predictable ways. The level descriptors must reward creativity as well as technique where appropriate. However, the idea of creativity tends to increase the level of subjectivity in the judgemental process and remains a significant challenge in achieving reliable marking.

2  Tasks calling for a personal response (most literature)
   Here, the point of view is the candidate’s own (there is no right answer) and this must be emphasised in the mark scheme. Within the assessment objectives being targeted, the level descriptors need to reward how well the arguments – both for and against – are understood, organised, illustrated and relevant. The indicative content needs merely to list some examples of relevant material.

3  “Open middled” tasks (some history, social science, geography)
   Here, the conclusion is expected, but there is a good deal of freedom as to what evidence is relevant and how it is used. As with personal response, part of the level descriptors must reward skill in constructing an argument and effectiveness of using examples. The indicative content can be a little fuller and perhaps can exclude certain information as not being relevant.

4  Largely closed tasks (some geography, law)
   Here, both the evidence and the conclusion are largely expected. In some ways, they are extended tests of knowledge, but responses need to show logical development as well as pure information. The level descriptors must focus on this logical development and thus understanding of the issues rather than opinion and the indicative content can be relatively prescriptive.
Subject-specific issues

1. **Error carried forward/follow through**
Several subjects, especially those which involve candidates carrying out multi-stage calculations, make it difficult to put into practice the principles that marking should be positive and that credit should not be repeatedly withheld for the same error. This has led to an approach whereby an error at an earlier stage of a task does not have disproportionate impact on the credit a candidate receives for the knowledge and skills shown.

There are two aspects to this. In mathematics, marks for a question are awarded independently for both the method and the accuracy of the answer. Thus, an answer which contains an arithmetical error will lose the accuracy marks but, as long as the method is appropriate will get the method marks. (And, of course, vice versa: a correct final answer does not always, of itself, earn method marks.)

The second is that an incorrect answer at an early stage of a question (or even in an earlier part of a multi-part item) is not a barrier to success later on in the response. Here the aim is that candidates are rewarded for any subsequent accurate calculations, albeit using an incorrect piece of data. Here the approach is to recalculate, using the candidate’s own value, and reward the answer if it is “correct”. (One aim of task setting is to minimise the number of occasions when this becomes an issue as it adds burden and complexity to the marking process.)

2. **Repeated error**
One characteristic of candidates is that if they make a particular error, they will tend to do so repeatedly across the assessment, especially given the nature of examination pressure. Again, the principle of positive marking suggests that this should not result in penalising the candidate every time the error occurs.

One place where this often occurs is in the use of units – or rather failure to do so – in mathematics, science or technology assessments. In general, the approach taken is to provide the units within the answer space, especially where they are largely self-evident, except where an understanding of the final unit is important. Here, it is normal to specify the requirement to give the units within the item and entirely appropriate to award credit for doing so.
Subject-specific issues

Assessment in modern foreign languages raises a similar issue. Here, a candidate may incorrectly use, for example, a given verb form. Clearly this needs to be taken into account in the assessment, but if the same error is repeated (it may be a verb form that occurs quite commonly in the language) it is telling you no more about the candidate’s skill in the language – other than, perhaps, that it really is an error rather than a piece of carelessness. It is unreasonable therefore to over-value that error in the assessment.

It should be noted that there is a common factor here: careful question-setting can mitigate problems and reduce strain on the mark scheme. Nonetheless, it is still important to be aware of these sorts of features when designing mark schemes for certain item types.

3. Irrelevant material as against incorrect material

The spirit of positive marking runs into a very specific difficulty in some subjects (the sciences are a common example). In items asking for, say, a description of a process, it is possible for candidates to include material that is irrelevant, as well as the relevant steps. In general, it is appropriate to reward the correct material and ignore that which is not relevant.

On occasion, however, the extra material is not so much irrelevant as so inappropriate as to make clear the candidate does not understand the process. It may include, for example, mutually contradictory steps. It is sometimes decided that such a response cannot be awarded the full credit for the correct material: if this is the case, the mark scheme must be very clear about how markers should adjust their marking.
E-marking

The increasing use of on-screen or on-line marking has several implications for the design of mark schemes and, indeed, assessments.

1. The use of clerical markers (low-tariff items only): it is probably necessary to aim for more comprehensive information as to what is or is not worthy of credit. Even so, it is important to provide a statement of the purpose of the item.

2. Marking sections of a paper rather than the whole: the fact that the markers will be marking very large numbers of a limited selection of items means that they will be more able to internalise the mark scheme. It may be possible, therefore, to provide more information in the mark scheme, but it is almost certainly a better strategy to engage the marker’s professionalism through exploring the purpose of the item.

3. It is likely that marking extended writing that covers more than one screen will be significantly harder than doing so on paper. The danger is that the markers will start to use different strategies, matching points in the indicative content, or feature spotting. The mark scheme needs to ensure that the focus remains on a qualitative judgement against the level descriptors (if this is the mark scheme type that is being used).

4. Markers usually prefer to (and are more reliable if) they use the mark scheme as a hard copy, since it facilitates the iterative process that markers use for all marking strategies. It is important to think of the mark scheme as a physical object, even though produced and available electronically.

5. There is likely to be a gradual move towards automated marking for some items in addition to the controlled response items that can currently be auto-marked. Research is currently being conducted on how to design the systems for machine-marking of constructed response items, with the main focus on front-loading a large volume of decisions taken by a human marker: in other words, the principles that inform those decisions need to be the same as outlined in this Guide.
Mark scheme examples

The following section provides some examples of different types of mark schemes. Some are examples of good practice and some examples of poor practice.

Some examples used in the Guide have been written specifically and others have been authored with reference to originals taken from a range of awarding bodies to illustrate particular points. Comments should not be considered to apply to similar currently available questions and mark schemes.

Controlled response

1 Mark

Constructed response

1 Mark

2-5 Marks

6-10 Marks

>10 Marks
Example 1: With obvious distractors

**Question:**
Before any item of paint spraying equipment is used, it should be

a) new and approved by the supplier  
b) in good condition and calibrated  
c) fitted with new filters  
d) registered with the Health & Safety Executive (HSE).

**Mark Scheme:**

- b (1 mark)

**Comment:**
With no knowledge about the use of paint spraying equipment, the answer is clearly (b) as it would be unrealistic for equipment to always be new, or to have new filters and the range of equipment available for general public use suggests that it would not be feasible for each item to be registered with the HSE.

Example 2: With obvious distractors

**Question:**
What is the main hazard that door supervisors will face when carrying out customer searches?

**Mark Scheme:**

- a (1 mark)

**Mark one answer:**

a) Customers may be concealing a weapon  
b) Searching slows down admission procedures  
c) Searching may put customers off coming to a premises  
d) Customers may refuse to be searched

**Comment:**
The answer is clearly a) as this is the only available answer referencing a hazard.
Example 1: Clear 1 mark mark scheme

Question:
Jess runs a Hairdressing Salon and relies on the profit to support her family. Other than by increasing sales, state one way that Jess could increase the shop’s profit.

(1 Mark)

Mark Scheme:
- Reduce costs/fixed costs
- Reduce wages costs
- Minimise wastage
- Pay less for stock

One mark for correct identification of a way to increase profit.

Comment:
This scheme clearly describes a range of acceptable answers using terms that are clear, yet also open enough to allow scope for individual learner wording.
Example 1: Clear points-based mark scheme

Question:

Describe the trend in the sales of Koi Carp in Europe as shown by the data in Figure X.

(3 marks)

Mark Scheme:

Examples of how the assessment objectives might be met in this question include:

• demonstrate knowledge and understanding of relevant issues such as sales and sales growth (A01).
• be applied to the context of the data provided (A02).

Relevant points could include:

• the rate of sales growth never falls below 15% (1 mark) (note: sales do not fall)
• sales growth is always positive (1 mark)
• sales growth peaks in 2010 (1 mark)
• sales are always rising. (1 mark) (Maximum of 3 marks)

This indicative content is not exhaustive; other creditworthy material should be awarded marks as appropriate.

Comment:

Although this mark scheme gives clear detail on possible responses, it would also benefit from clarification on whether answers must include both a description of trends (A01) and refer specifically to the data given (A02), or for example, whether answers including 3 points on trends and issues without reference to the context data, would still allow learners to receive the full 3 marks.
Example 2: Clear points-based mark scheme

**Question:**
Describe two features of the East End of London that made it a target for the German Blitz.

(4 marks)

**Mark Scheme:**
Target: knowledge of key features and characteristics of the period.

Award 1 mark for each valid feature identified up to a maximum of two features. The second mark should be awarded for supporting information. e.g.

- London’s docks were in the East End (1). Over a third of Britain’s trade passed through the port of London (1).
- It was an area where materials were stored (1). This included coal supplies for the war effort (1).
- It was a heavily populated part of the capital (1). A high casualty rate in this area would affect morale in the capital (1).

Accept other appropriate features and supporting information.

**Comment:**
The phrasing of the question clearly signposts to learners that the mark scheme will require them to include a specific number of features and clarify why each of these features were of importance. This is then clearly exemplified in the mark scheme, which also includes guidance on the maximum number/split of marks between the 2 required types of response.

Adapted From Pearson Edexcel Level 1/Level 2 GCSE (9-1) in History – Sample Assessment Materials (Mark Schemes) – Issue 1 – October 2015 Q1
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Example 3: Clear points-based mark scheme

Question:
(a) Write down a number between 1.67 and 1.68
(b) Write down a prime number between 14 and 22
(c) Find a fraction between $1/4$ and $1/3$

Mark Scheme:
(a) Any correct response (utilising additional decimal place(s)) (1 mark)
(b) 17 or 19 (Either answer/both accepted) (1 mark)
(c) Any correct fraction e.g. $2/7, 7/24, 3/10$ (2 marks)
OR
Any correct decimal $n$ where $0.25 < n < 0.3$ (1 mark)
Do not accept: $1/3.5$

Comment:
This mark scheme clearly states the parameters for the correct answers and related marks for each section, including a definition of an unacceptable response. It is also a good example of positive marking as it includes an option for section (c) where learners might still gain credit if they have given a correct answer but switched from fractions to decimals.
Example 4: Complex and cluttered points-based mark scheme

**Question:**
Give two reasons why a coach may want an athlete to undergo fitness testing.

(2 marks)

**Mark Scheme:**
Award 1 mark for each valid reason outlined (max 2).

**Reasons**
- To highlight strengths and weaknesses and identify areas to improve with performance (1)
- To benchmark/baseline performance in order to (a) set targets and (b) judge the effectiveness of training programmes (1)
- As a motivational tool (1)
- To assess levels of fitness following injury/period of rehabilitation (1)
- To identify talent (1)
- To compare with others (use of normative tables) (1)
- Accept any relevant reason

**Comment:**
This is only a 2 mark answer, but the mark scheme appears to be heavily detailed, offering 6 alternative answers, some of which appear to overlap in terms of the concept (e.g., identifying areas for improvement could also cover setting targets).

In addition, the second example appears to cover 2 points (setting targets and judging effectiveness), but only attracting 1 mark.
### Example 5: Clear levels of response mark scheme

#### Spelling, punctuation and grammar

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Marks</th>
<th>Descriptors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0 Marks</td>
<td>0 marks awarded</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- The candidate writes nothing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- The candidate's response does not relate to the question.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- The candidate's achievement in SPaG does not reach the threshold.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Performance level, for example errors in spelling, punctuation and grammar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Severely hinder meaning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Mark</td>
<td>Threshold performance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Candidates spell and punctuate with reasonable accuracy, but</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- with some errors that may distract and hinder ease of interpretation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Candidates use rules of grammar with some control of meaning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- and any errors do not significantly hinder meaning overall.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Candidates use a limited range of specialist terms as appropriate.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Marks</td>
<td>Intermediate performance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Candidates spell and punctuate with general accuracy, with</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- several errors but no great impact on ease of interpretation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Candidates use rules of grammar with general control of meaning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- overall.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Candidates use a good range of specialist terms as appropriate.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Marks</td>
<td>High performance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Candidates spell and punctuate with consistent accuracy, with</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- few if any errors, having little or no impact on ease of interpretation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Candidates use rules of grammar with effective control of</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- meaning overall.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Candidates use a wide range of specialist terms as appropriate.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Comment:**

This mark scheme clearly articulates different factors to consider against each of the available marks and includes guidance on how to distinguish between levels for each of these.
Example 1: Clear points-based mark scheme

**Question:**
A farm manager wants to maintain high standards of husbandry for his milking herd. Explain three considerations that the manager will need to take into account when creating a breeding plan for the milking herd.

(6 marks)

**Mark Scheme:**
Award 1 mark for each consideration identified and 1 mark for a correct explanation of that consideration (3x2=6 marks maximum):

- udder health (1) good indicator of milk productivity and quality (1)
- oestrus cycle (1) understanding the patterns of oestrus will allow for high breeding productivity of females (1)
- breeding productivity (1) females who are good mothers and have regular offspring are more likely to give a good milk yield (1)
- fertility status of the male (1) there should be a high sperm motility in significant numbers (1)
- gestation period (1) five month gestation allows for planning and preparation for husbandry requirements (1)
- feed intake (1) allowances in ration and budgets for an increased feed intake for females and their offspring (1)

or any other acceptable answer.

**Comment:**
As this question attracts a mid-range number of marks, this mark scheme needs to cover a wider range of responses than low mark questions. However, the structure of the scheme remains clear and uncluttered, starting with a clarification of the relative breakdown of the marks and then offering examples which are clear and relate to distinct points.

Adapted from Pearson BTEC-Nationals Animal Management 2016 Sample Assessment Material Unit 1 Animal-Breeding-and-Genetics Q4a
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Example 2: Unclear points-based and levels of response mark scheme

Question:
Suggest two ways that a manager of a large office can promote anti-discriminatory practice. (6 Marks)

Mark Scheme:
• organise staff training in anti-discriminatory practice, e.g. to equip staff to challenge discriminatory behaviour by service users such as the use of inappropriate language
• introduce a complaints policy to encourage service users to complain if they are discriminated against
• deal robustly with complaints if they happen
• make sure appropriate anti-discriminatory policies are in place, e.g. complaints policy, whistle blowing policy
• encourage staff to use whistle blowing procedures to report colleagues who engage in discriminatory practices and deal robustly with reports of discrimination against service users
• support staff in anti-discriminatory practice, e.g. have forums for discussion for staff and supervise inexperienced staff in their work
• set a good example in own practice
• directly challenge staff and service users when incidents of discrimination occur and use disciplinary procedures with staff if it becomes necessary

All other valid responses must be given credit.

Level descriptors:
[1] basic suggestions
[2] adequate suggestions
[3] competent suggestions
(2 × [3]) [6]

Comment:
This is offered as an example where it is not immediately obvious how the marks should be allocated against a response. For example, some of the indicative content suggests it would be 1 mark for an answer and then 2 marks for explaining why it would be effective, but, other indicative content doesn’t appear to include this justification. In addition, the question itself doesn’t ask candidates to provide any further explanation therefore candidates may be left assuming that simply providing 2 examples will result in 6 marks being awarded.

With regards to the marks for quality of response, the level descriptors particularly for 1 and 2 marks are difficult to separate.
Example 3: Clear levels of response mark scheme which incorporates indicative content

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**Question:**

Explain, with examples, the convention of collective cabinet responsibility.

**Target AO1: 6 marks**

**Mark Scheme:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Marks</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 3     | 5-6   | • The answer demonstrates accurate knowledge of political concepts, institutions and/or processes relevant to collective cabinet responsibility.  
       |       | • Developed explanation(s) and appropriate selection of supporting examples demonstrate accurate understanding of relevant political concepts, institutions and processes. |
| 2     | 3-4   | • The answer demonstrates generally accurate knowledge of political concepts, institutions and processes relevant to collective cabinet responsibility.  
       |       | • Some development in the explanation(s) and generally appropriate selection of supporting examples demonstrate generally accurate understanding, though inaccuracies will be present. |
| 1     | 1-2   | • The answer demonstrates limited knowledge and understanding of political concepts, institutions and processes relevant to collective cabinet responsibility.  
       |       | • Limited development in the explanation(s) and selection of supporting examples demonstrate limited understanding of relevant political concepts, institutions and processes, with further detail required and inaccuracies and omissions present throughout. |
| 0     | 0     | • Nothing worthy of credit |

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*Continues on next page...*
Example 3: Clear levels of response mark scheme which incorporates indicative content (continued)

Indicative content

In their explanation of the convention of collective cabinet responsibility, students might cover areas such as the following:

- Definition of collective cabinet responsibility: (All cabinet members will publicly support government policy. This is the case regardless of whether they privately disagree. Those unwilling to offer support will normally resign).
- Explain that being a convention, not a statutory requirement, collective responsibility can be diluted when expedient.
- Explain how the convention has been used (or misused) in British politics, illustrating with historic or recent examples.

This should be illustrated with historical or recent examples, such as its abandonment for the 1975 or 2015 referendums on EU membership, or the reduction of collective cabinet responsibility the 2010 coalition’s ‘agreement to differ’ principle, on issues such as reforms of the electoral system and of the House of Lords.

Students would not need to cover each and every one of the above points to gain high marks. Some may introduce further relevant points which should be credited.

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Comment:

The three levels are clearly distinct and the Indicative Content provides both the kind of explanations that are expected and the sort of material that may be used to illustrate them. It should be noted that this mark scheme would be supported by general instructions on how to use it.
Example 4: Levels of response mark scheme with unclear discrimination between level descriptors

Question:
Choose one social media platform such as Facebook. Explore how this platform is used to promote an artist or band. [10 marks]

Level descriptors for levels 1-5:
Level 5 A01 (5 marks) - Excellent and perceptive knowledge and understanding of a social platform
Level 5 A02 (5 marks) - Excellent and perceptive application of knowledge and understanding to analyse how a social platform promotes an artist or band
Level 4 A01 (4 marks) - Good knowledge and understanding of a social platform
Level 4 (AO2) (4 marks) - Good application of knowledge and understanding to analyse how a social platform promotes an artist or band
Level 3 A01 (3 marks) - Satisfactory knowledge and understanding of a social platform
Level 3 A02 (3 marks) - Satisfactory application of knowledge and understanding to analyse how a social platform promotes an artist or band
Level 2 A01 (2 marks) - Basic knowledge and understanding of a social platform
Level 2 A02 (2 marks) - Basic application of knowledge and understanding to analyse how a social platform promotes an artist or band
Level 1 A01 (1 mark) - Very limited knowledge and understanding of a social platform
Level 1 A02 (1 mark) - Very limited application of knowledge and understanding to analyse how a social platform promotes an artist or band

Comment:
Differentiating between these descriptors is likely to become subjective as there is insufficient clarity on the difference between each definition particularly for the level 1-3 descriptors. This could lead to inconsistency between markers. On a separate point, the grammar in the descriptors could be improved to focus on “the use of...” social platforms.
### Example 1: Clear analytical mark scheme

**GCSE French - Assessment Grid for Speaking Conversation (30 marks)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Communication and interaction</th>
<th>Pronunciation and intonation</th>
<th>Linguistic knowledge &amp; accuracy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Band 5</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Confidently initiates and leads the conversation. Conveys detailed and relevant information.</td>
<td>- Very good pronunciation and intonation.</td>
<td>- Excellent language with a wide variety of vocabulary and grammatical structures, including complex structures.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Consistently develops responses to questions in extended sequences of speech. Narrates events coherently when asked to do so.</td>
<td>- Consistently accurate with only minor inaccuracies.</td>
<td>- High level of accuracy with only a few minor errors which occur when attempting more complex structures or vocabulary. References to past, present and future events are successful.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Consistently able to express and justify thoughts, points of view and exchange opinions in detail.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Excellent interaction with natural responses and some fluency.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13-15 marks</td>
<td>5 marks</td>
<td>9-10 marks</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| **Band 4**                    |                              |                                 |
| - Can initiate and lead most of the conversation. Conveys detailed and mainly relevant information in response to questions. Almost always conveys information clearly. | - Very good pronunciation and intonation with occasional inaccuracies. | - Very good language with some variety of vocabulary and grammatical structures. |
| - Regularly develops responses to questions in extended sequences of speech. Usually narrates events when asked to do so. |                              | - Very good level of accuracy with some minor errors. Other errors occur when attempting more complex structures or vocabulary. References to past, present and future events are mostly successful. |
| - Able to express and justify thoughts, points of view and exchange opinions in some detail. |                              |                                 |
| - Very good interaction to questions. Usually prompt responses. |                              |                                 |
| 10-12 marks                   | 4 marks                      | 7-8 marks                       |

| **Band 3**                    |                              |                                 |
| - Can initiate the conversation may need occasional prompting. Conveys mainly relevant information with some detail in response to questions. Usually conveys information clearly. | - Generally good pronunciation and intonation. | - Good language with some variety of vocabulary and grammatical structures, including some complex structures. |
| - Conveys mainly relevant information with some detail in response to the questions. Develops some responses to questions in extended sequences of speech. Sometimes narrates events when asked to do so. |                              | - A good level of accuracy. There may be minor errors and occasionally more serious ones. Attempts made at more complex structures are sometimes successful. References to past, present and future events are made and are sometimes successful. |
| - Able to justify thoughts, points of view and exchange opinions. |                              |                                 |
| - Good interaction. There may be some hesitations but the conversation has a reasonable pace. |                              |                                 |
| 7-9 marks                     | 3 marks                      | 5-6 marks                       |

Continues on next page...
Example 1: Clear analytical mark scheme (continued)

GCSE French - Assessment Grid for Speaking Conversation (30 marks)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Communication and interaction</th>
<th>Pronunciation and intonation</th>
<th>Linguistic knowledge &amp; accuracy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Band 2</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Can initiate the conversation but needs support to extend responses. Conveys mainly relevant and mainly clear information.</td>
<td>• Generally good pronunciation and intonation but with some inconsistency.</td>
<td>• Generally good language with a mainly simple range of vocabulary and grammatical structures. Attempts made at more complex structures.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Occasional extended responses to questions. Occasionally narrates events briefly when asked to do so.</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Generally good level of accuracy when using simple structures. There may be errors but they do not generally prevent communication. Some success in making reference to past, present and future events.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Able to express thoughts, points of view and exchange opinions with some justification.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Generally good interaction with some spontaneity. Sometimes hesitates and may not be able to respond to some questions.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-6 marks</td>
<td>2 marks</td>
<td>3-4 marks</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| **Band 1**                   |                             |                               |
| • Attempts to initiate the conversation. Needs support to both structure and extend the conversation Conveys some relevant information in response to questions. Responses may be occasionally unclear. | • Pronunciation and intonation is more accurate than inaccurate. | • Reasonable language with a simple range of vocabulary and simple grammatical structures. Limited attempts made at more complex structures. |
| • Occasionally attempts longer responses to questions. Has limited success in narrating events. |                             | • Accuracy demonstrated when using simple structures. There may be errors which occasionally prevent communication. Attempts to make reference to past, present and future events may have only limited success. |
| • Able to express thoughts, some points of view and exchange some opinions with simple justification. |                             |                               |
| • Reasonable interaction with a little spontaneity. The conversation often has hesitations, and delivery can be quite slow at times. |                             |                               |
| 1-3 marks                    | 1 mark                      | 1-2 marks                     |

| **Band O**                   |                             |                               |
| • Response not worthy of credit or not attempted. | • Generally good pronunciation and intonation. | • Generally good pronunciation and intonation. |
|                             | 0 marks                     | 0 marks                       |

Comment:
The scheme has an even distribution of marks across the levels and the descriptors include clear incremental steps, in a consistent format, to classify how knowledge and understanding should be judged.

Adapted from: WJEC GCSE French Sample Assessment materials with permission from WJEC.
Example 2: Levels of response mark scheme with uneven-sized levels

Question:
Explain why the areas such as “Little Ireland” in nineteenth-century Hulme were significant in the development of crime and its policing in Manchester [12]

Mark Scheme:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AO1 (2 marks)</th>
<th>BAND 4</th>
<th>BAND 3</th>
<th>BAND 2</th>
<th>BAND 1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Offers a sophisticated and reasoned explanation and analysis of the significance of the historic environment. The answer fully addresses the position of the historic environment in showing changes in crime and punishment set within nineteenth century Manchester.</td>
<td>Offers a reasoned explanation and analysis of the significance of the historic environment in showing changes in crime and punishment set within nineteenth century Manchester.</td>
<td>2 Demonstrates detailed knowledge and understanding of the key features in the question.</td>
<td>1 Demonstrates some knowledge and understanding of the key features in the question.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>9-10</td>
<td>6-8</td>
<td>4-5</td>
<td>1-3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Comment:
As well as demonstrating differences in the marks available for each band, in this example the marker has to judge 2 different AO5 with similar terms used for different mark bands. i.e. the term “some” is used at band 1 for AO1 and at band 2 for AO2. This could result in confusion for the marker and the marks being allocated incorrectly to one AO descriptor or the other.
**Example 3: Holistic levels of response mark scheme**

**Mark Scheme:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>0 marks</th>
<th>Nothing worthy of credit.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1–4 marks</td>
<td>Level 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• There may be an extremely basic awareness of one relevant point.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• There is likely to be no development or analysis.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The response may be tangential.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Reference to relevant points may seem accidental.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Errors of understanding are likely to be intrusive.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• At the very bottom of this level there will be no creditworthy material.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Knowledge may be fragmentary.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Technical language is not employed or is employed inappropriately.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The response may not be legible and errors of spelling, punctuation and grammar are intrusive.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5–9 marks</td>
<td>Level 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• There may be a basic or unsophisticated grasp of some historical issues.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Analysis may be predominantly simple and/or lack clarity in places.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• There may be errors of reasoning and understanding.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Evaluation, if present, will lack penetration or be very narrowly confined.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The response may lack overall purpose.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The response may fail to directly address the relevant historical issues.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• At the lower end of the level, the response may be disjointed.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Technical language is limited in its employment or used inappropriately.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The response may not be legible and errors of spelling, punctuation and grammar may be intrusive.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10–15 marks</td>
<td>Level 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Responses in this level may be short or of limited scope.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• There may be narrow focus on one aspect of the topic.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• A range of historical issues may be referred to with limited understanding or analysis.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Evaluation may be replaced by assertion or counter-suggestion.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Sporadic insights may be present but they would lack development.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Some knowledge will be present but it is likely to either lack detail and precision, or will not be analysed or evaluated. This is likely to feature at the lower end of the level.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The response is legible, employing some technical language accurately, with possibly some errors of spelling, punctuation and grammar.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Continues on next page...*
Example 3: Holistic levels of response mark scheme (continued)

Mark Scheme:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>16–21 marks</th>
<th>Level 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The response will explain and analyse some relevant material.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positions might be juxtaposed rather than critically compared.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relevance will generally be sustained, though there may be occasional tangents at the lower end of the level.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge of historical issues will be present but may lack depth and/or precision.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluative points are likely to be underdeveloped or applied to a limited range of material and may not be convincing.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Examples are likely to be used descriptively rather than critically.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The response is legible, employing technical language accurately and appropriately, with few, if any errors of spelling, punctuation and grammar.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>22–25 marks</th>
<th>Level 5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Relevant historical issues will be analysed and explained but there may be some imprecision.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Examples will be deployed effectively but their implications may not be made fully apparent.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation must be present but may lack impact, or it may be penetrating over a limited range of material.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There will be knowledge and understanding of the historical issues but it may not be fully exploited.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The response is legible, employing technical language accurately and appropriately, with few, if any errors of spelling, punctuation and grammar.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The response reads as a coherent and integrated whole.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>26–30 marks</th>
<th>Level 6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Relevant historical issues will be analysed with positions clearly and precisely explained.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The analysis and use of examples will proceed from a secure knowledge base.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation must be present and will show sophistication and direct engagement of the issues.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The relation between argument and conclusion will be clear.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The response is written in a fluent and sophisticated style with minimal, if any errors of spelling, punctuation and grammar. The response will read as a coherent whole.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Comment:

This illustrates several of the problems associated with a holistic mark scheme. There are so many separate bullets covering everything: knowledge, understanding, analysis, evaluation and even technical accuracy: that it is likely to be difficult to find a confident best fit for any given response. In addition this particular scheme uses six bands which demonstrates how hard it is to create clear differences between each band using natural language. These two aspects taken together may tend to compress the range of marks used, with markers likely to underuse level 6. On a separate point, the scheme uses uneven mark ranges (from 4-6 marks) for no obvious reason.
General: Mark scheme checklist

### Coverage

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Yes/No?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Does the mark scheme and related items directly assess the assessment objectives (AO) and specification?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Do each of the items stand alone?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Avoid repeating information used in other items or expected in other responses and also, avoid reliance on a correct response in a previous question.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Is the method of assessment appropriate for the outcome/objective being assessed?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• E.g. short answer items work well for specific knowledge-based assessment objectives but may struggle to cover the range of response needed for gauging the ability of a candidate to discuss a point and offer informed opinion.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Is the demand of the item reflected in the associated mark scheme and does this reflect the weighting and coverage of this content in the specification?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Does the mark scheme and related item clearly and concisely specify both the required content and the standard of response/performance required?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Does the mark scheme provide sufficient information to decide whether an answer is worthy of credit?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Does the content of the mark scheme present a fair reflection of what a candidate working at this level would be expected to know?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Language

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Yes/No?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Is the wording clear and unambiguous?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Does it provide the basis for valid and reliable assessment?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Does the mark scheme match the AQ and the relevant command words used in the related items?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Does the mark scheme and related items avoid the use of negative wording? E.g. “not unlike”.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Where this is unavoidable, have efforts been made to highlight terms to avoid confusion e.g. using bold, underlining, capitals “NOT” etc.?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Are technical terms used consistently in the mark scheme and their related item?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## General: Mark scheme checklist

### Mark allocation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Yes/No?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1  Is the number of marks allocated appropriate to the item?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2  Do the marks in the mark scheme match those stated against each item?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3  Does the mark scheme present <strong>hurdles</strong> by rewarding answers which the item has not asked for?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• e.g. awarding marks for examples when these were not asked for.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4  Where optional items are included, do the marks available match for each option?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5  Is the mark scheme prescriptive?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Is the level of prescription appropriate and does it avoid disallowing valid answers?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does the mark scheme allow marker discretion for unexpected but valid responses, measured against the principles behind the outcome?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6  Does the mark scheme avoid the use of negative marking?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7  Has consideration been given to including description of omissions or errors that would define an unsatisfactory response (0 marks)?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• e.g. How to deal with self-contradicting answers which might contain some part of a correct response but demonstrate a lack of understanding.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Layout of the mark scheme

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Yes/No?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1  Is the mark scheme clear, uncluttered and logical in layout and content?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2  Does the mark scheme avoid surplus information which might distract and overload markers?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Controlled response mark scheme additional checklist

### For multiple choice items

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Yes/No?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1  | Does the marking avoid the use of a systemic sequence of correct answers?  
    | E.g. 1=A, 2=B, 3=C, 4=D, 5=A etc.                                      |         |
| 2  | Are distractors plausible and context appropriate?                     |         |
| 3  | Is there a sufficient number of distractors to provide alternatives without overwhelming the candidate? |         |
| 4  | Does the correct answer stand out as different from the distractors?    |         
    | E.g. is it more detailed than other answers, or, the only answer with two points made? |         |
| 6  | Is there a single correct answer?                                       |         |

### For true/false items

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Yes/No?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Is the distribution of True/False answers equal?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Are the answers limited to a single response?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### For items using matching

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Yes/No?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Does the mark scheme reflect the fact that some descriptors may be used more than once?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Constructed response: 1 mark mark scheme additional checklist**

### 1 mark mark scheme checklist

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Yes/No?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1  Does the mark scheme clarify an appropriate range of acceptable answers?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2  Does the mark scheme clarify which answers are not acceptable?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Constructed response: 2-5 marks, 6-10 marks or >10 marks mark scheme additional checklist**

For points-based answers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Yes/No?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1  Are the rules for the accrual and split of marks clear?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2  If required has sufficient guidance been provided on follow/carry through marks?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3  Does the list of possible sources of credit remain succinct enough to avoid the possibility of gaining full marks for relatively peripheral points?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4  Does the mark scheme clarify which answers are not acceptable?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Checklist for levels of response mark scheme

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Yes/No?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1  Is there a clear distinction between each level descriptor?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2  Is there clear evidence of progression between each level? • Is this based on increased quality of response not just quantity?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3  Are the qualitative level descriptors clear and unambiguous?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4  In sequential multiple mark questions, do these gradually build in demand for each section/sequence of related items, as candidates might expect?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5  Is the mark scheme clear in terms of awarding marks for both content and quality of response, if appropriate?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6  Is there an even spread of marks across each of the levels?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7  Is there a manageable number of levels? • i.e. 5 or less.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8  Does the mark scheme allow the full range of marks to be awarded?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9  Does the detail on anticipated and required responses support consistent decisions without encouraging negative marking against model answers?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 If required has sufficient guidance been provided on follow/carry through marks?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 If required, does the mark scheme sufficiently clarify marks for Spelling, Punctuation and Grammar?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 Has indicative content followed good practice and been separated from the marking section?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Glossary

**Analytical mark scheme**: a form of *levels of response mark scheme* where the knowledge and skills targeted by the item are judged discretely. This usually involves creating a separate set of mark bands for each **Assessment Objective** (AO), with a description for each and the marker deciding on the best fit of a response for each strand. Such a scheme is often presented in the form of a grid. This grid allows for the marks awarded explicitly to reflect the intended weightings across the AOs.

**Assessment objective (AO)**: a statement of an aspect of a subject that will be assessed in a qualification. It is given a weighting (sometimes within a range) in the subject content. AOs usually cover knowledge and understanding, application, and analysis and evaluation, as well as subject-specific aspects. Each specification sets out how the overall assessment meets these requirements. This helps address the issue of comparability between qualifications from different awarding bodies within and across years.

**Constructed response item**: an item where candidates have to create and input their own response to an item. This can be anything from a single-mark item to one requiring a full essay.

**Controlled response item**: an item where the candidate has to select a response from one provided from within the assessment. This could be multiple choice, true/false and so on. It is possible to use such items to test a wide range of skills but in knowledge-based examinations in the UK, they are usually used to test a single piece of knowledge or a simple calculation.

**Error Carried Forward or Follow Through marks**: An approach designed to meet the principle that a candidate should be penalised only once for any given error. The basic idea is that an incorrect answer later in a question is marked correct if it is correctly calculated using an incorrect answer from earlier in the question. The mark scheme will have to make clear any limitations in applying the system, for example, the nature of the error.

**Holistic mark scheme**: a form of *levels-based mark scheme* in which the marker is required to judge the answer against the full range of what the item is targeting in a single step. The performance descriptions therefore have to indicate what is expected in each of the targeted AOs and the marker has to make a decision of best fit across all the AOs, taking into account any differences in weighting.
Glossary

**Hurdle:** a specific requirement that higher marks are only available if a response contains a feature not explicitly called for by the question.

**Indicative content:** examples of the type of material a candidate may include when answering a question. It may suggest ways in which the material may be handled differently by candidates of different attainment. It is usually accompanied by a warning that it is for illustrative purposes and does not reflect required content.

**Levels of response mark scheme** (also called a **Levels-based mark scheme**): a mark scheme where the marker compares the candidate’s performance with a set of descriptions of performance across the knowledge and skills targeted by the item. The marker has to decide which description best fits the candidate performance and then awards a mark from within a band of marks it applies to. Such schemes can be used on relatively low-**tariff** items requiring qualitative assessment to much more extensive tasks. They are characterised as either **Holistic** or **Analytical**.

**Model answer:** the examiner writes a model of how the student is expected to respond.

**Outcome space:** the complete set of possible responses to a given task. This includes both the full range of rewardeable material and that which does not receive credit. The mark scheme is essentially the anticipated outcome space, and the aim is that this should perfectly match the actual one. The more tightly defined the task, the easier it is to control the outcome space.

**Points-based mark scheme:** a mark scheme which lists the points that are acceptable for an answer. This will normally award one mark per acceptable point up to a given maximum, and there are usually a few more acceptable answers than the maximum mark. Such schemes can be used for items carrying just a couple of marks to assessing an essay. Such a scheme will also need to indicate any variations in the expression of each acceptable point which will be allowed.

**Tariff:** the number of marks an item carries. For the purposes of this Guide there are single-mark items; low-tariff items (2-5 marks); mid-tariff items (6-10 marks); and high-tariff items (more than 10 marks). However, these divisions are not perfectly rigid.