A-level
PHYSICS
7408/3BA

Paper 3 Section B Astrophysics

Mark scheme

June 2025

Version: 1.0 Final

256A7408/3BA/MS

Mark schemes are prepared by the Lead Assessment Writer and considered, together with the relevant questions, by a panel of subject teachers. This mark scheme includes any amendments made at the standardisation events which all associates participate in and is the scheme which was used by them in this examination. The standardisation process ensures that the mark scheme covers the students' responses to questions and that every associate understands and applies it in the same correct way. As preparation for standardisation each associate analyses a number of students' scripts. Alternative answers not already covered by the mark scheme are discussed and legislated for. If, after the standardisation process, associates encounter unusual answers which have not been raised they are required to refer these to the Lead Examiner.

It must be stressed that a mark scheme is a working document, in many cases further developed and expanded on the basis of students' reactions to a particular paper. Assumptions about future mark schemes on the basis of one year's document should be avoided; whilst the guiding principles of assessment remain constant, details will change, depending on the content of a particular examination paper.

No student should be disadvantaged on the basis of their gender identity and/or how they refer to the gender identity of others in their exam responses.

A consistent use of 'they/them' as a singular and pronouns beyond 'she/her' or 'he/him' will be credited in exam responses in line with existing mark scheme criteria.

Further copies of this mark scheme are available from aqa.org.uk

Physics - Mark scheme instructions to examiners

1. General

The mark scheme for each question shows:

- the marks available for each part of the question
- the total marks available for the question
- the typical answer or answers which are expected
- extra information to help the Examiner make his or her judgement and help to delineate what is acceptable or not worthy of credit or, in discursive answers, to give an overview of the area in which a mark or marks may be awarded.

The extra information is aligned to the appropriate answer in the left-hand part of the mark scheme and should only be applied to that item in the mark scheme.

At the beginning of a part of a question a reminder may be given, for example: where consequential marking needs to be considered in a calculation; or the answer may be on the diagram or at a different place on the script.

In general the right-hand side of the mark scheme is there to provide those extra details which confuse the main part of the mark scheme yet may be helpful in ensuring that marking is straightforward and consistent.

2. Emboldening

2.1
In a list of acceptable answers where more than one mark is available 'any **two** from' is used, with the number of marks emboldened. Each of the following bullet points is a potential mark.

2.2
A bold **and** is used to indicate that both parts of the answer are required to award the mark.

2.3
Alternative answers acceptable for a mark are indicated by the use of **or**. Different terms in the mark scheme are shown by a / ; eg allow smooth / free movement.

3. Marking points

3.1 Marking of lists
This applies to questions requiring a set number of responses, but for which candidates have provided extra responses. The general principle to be followed in such a situation is that 'right + wrong = wrong'.

Each error/contradiction negates each correct response. So, if the number of errors/contradictions equals or exceeds the number of marks available for the question, no marks can be awarded.

However, responses considered to be neutral (often prefaced by 'Ignore' in the mark scheme) are not penalised.

3.2 Marking procedure for calculations

Full marks can usually be given for a correct numerical answer without working shown unless the question states 'Show your working'. However, if a correct numerical answer can be evaluated from incorrect physics then working will be required. The mark scheme will indicate both this and the credit (if any) that can be allowed for the incorrect approach.
However, if the answer is incorrect, mark(s) can usually be gained by correct substitution/working and this is shown in the 'extra information' column or by each stage of a longer calculation.

A calculation must be followed through to answer in decimal form. An answer in surd form is never acceptable for the final (evaluation) mark in a calculation and will therefore generally be denied one mark.

3.3 Interpretation of 'it'

Answers using the word 'it' should be given credit only if it is clear that the 'it' refers to the correct subject.

3.4 Errors carried forward, consequential marking and arithmetic errors

Allowances for errors carried forward are likely to be restricted to calculation questions and should be shown by the abbreviation ECF or *conseq* in the marking scheme.

An arithmetic error should be penalised for one mark only unless otherwise amplified in the marking scheme. Arithmetic errors may arise from a slip in a calculation or from an incorrect transfer of a numerical value from data given in a question.

3.5 Phonetic spelling

The phonetic spelling of correct scientific terminology should be credited (eg fizix) **unless** there is a possible confusion (eg defraction/refraction) with another technical term.

3.6 Brackets

(…..) are used to indicate information which is not essential for the mark to be awarded but is included to help the examiner identify the sense of the answer required.

3.7 Ignore / Insufficient / Do <u>not</u> allow

'Ignore' or 'insufficient' is used when the information given is irrelevant to the question or not enough to gain the marking point. Any further correct amplification could gain the marking point.

'Do **not** allow' means that this is a wrong answer which, even if the correct answer is given, will still mean that the mark is not awarded.

3.8 Significant figure penalties

Answers to questions in the practical sections (7407/2 – Section A and 7408/3A) should display an appropriate number of significant figures. For non-practical sections, an A-level paper may contain up to 2 marks (1 mark for AS) that are contingent on the candidate quoting the **final** answer in a calculation to a specified number of significant figures (sf). This will generally be assessed to be the number of sf of the datum with the least number of sf from which the answer is determined. The mark scheme will give the range of sf that are acceptable but this will normally be the sf of the datum (or this sf −1).

An answer in surd form cannot gain the sf mark. An incorrect calculation **following some working** can gain the sf mark. For a question beginning with the command word 'Show that…', the answer should be quoted to **one more** sf than the sf quoted in the question eg 'Show that X is equal to about 2.1 cm' – answer should be quoted to 3 sf. An answer to 1 sf will not normally be acceptable, unless the answer is an integer eg a number of objects. In non-practical sections, the need for a consideration will be indicated in the question by the use of 'Give your answer to an appropriate number of significant figures'.

3.9 Unit penalties

An A-level paper may contain up to 2 marks (1 mark for AS) that are contingent on the candidate quoting the correct unit for the answer to a calculation. The need for a unit to be quoted will be indicated in the question by the use of 'State an appropriate SI unit for your answer'. Unit answers will be expected to appear in the most commonly agreed form for the calculation concerned; strings of fundamental (base) units would not. For example, 1 tesla and 1 Wb m^{-2} would both be acceptable units for magnetic flux density but 1 kg m^2 s^{-2} A^{-1} would not.

3.10 Level of response marking instructions

Level of response mark schemes are broken down into three levels, each of which has a descriptor. The descriptor for the level shows the average performance for the level. There are two marks in each level.

Before you apply the mark scheme to a student's answer read through the answer and annotate it (as instructed) to show the qualities that are being looked for. You can then apply the mark scheme.

Determining a level

Start at the lowest level of the mark scheme and use it as a ladder to see whether the answer meets the descriptor for that level. The descriptor for the level indicates the different qualities that might be seen in the student's answer for that level. If it meets the lowest level then go to the next one and decide if it meets this level, and so on, until you have a match between the level descriptor and the answer. With practice and familiarity you will find that for better answers you will be able to quickly skip through the lower levels of the mark scheme.

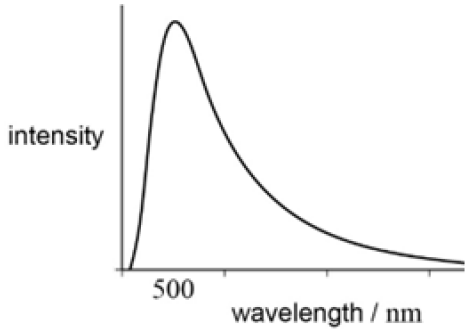
When assigning a level you should look at the overall quality of the answer and not look to pick holes in small and specific parts of the answer where the student has not performed quite as well as the rest. If the answer covers different aspects of different levels of the mark scheme you should use a best fit approach for defining the level and then use the variability of the response to help decide the mark within the level, ie if the response is predominantly level 2 with a small amount of level 3 material it would be placed in level 2.

The exemplar materials used during standardisation will help you to determine the appropriate level. There will be an answer in the standardising materials which will correspond with each level of the mark scheme. This answer will have been awarded a mark by the Lead Examiner. You can compare the student's answer with the example to determine if it is the same standard, better or worse than the example. You can then use this to allocate a mark for the answer based on the Lead Examiner's mark on the example.

You may well need to read back through the answer as you apply the mark scheme to clarify points and assure yourself that the level and the mark are appropriate.

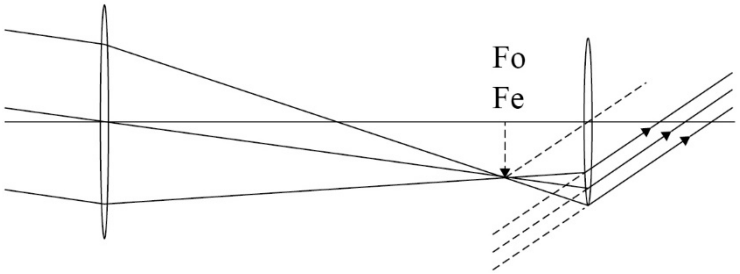
Indicative content in the mark scheme is provided as a guide for examiners. It is not intended to be exhaustive and you must credit other valid points. Students do not have to cover all of the points mentioned in the indicative content to reach the highest level of the mark scheme.

An answer which contains nothing of relevance to the question must be awarded no marks.

Question	Answers	Additional comments/Guidance	Mark	AO
01.1	Evidence of $\lambda_{max} = 500$ nm / 0.5μm etc. (seen in calculation or graph) ✓ Shape correct ✓ i.e.  Scale with their λ_{max} at their peak and unit shown on scale consistent with value ✓	No sf penalty MP1 value consistent with their unit (can be shown as calculation) MP2: Single peak shown with clearly steeper LHS than RHS AND correct shape on RHS MP3: scale shown with indication of $\lambda_{max.}$ Allow zero on axis.	3	1 × AO1 1 × AO2 1 × AO3

Question	Answers	Additional comments/Guidance	Mark	AO
01.2	5	accept answers that round to 5	1	AO2

Question	Answers	Additional comments/Guidance	Mark	AO
01.3	(Idea that the planet is much smaller than the star and therefore): variation of quantity AND named/described method of measurement ✓	Mark as list. Answer must refer to a method of detecting exoplanets Treat comments about direct observations of the planet as neutral	1	AO3
Total			**5**	

Question	Answers	Additional comments/Guidance	Mark	AO
02.1	Diagram correct with a set of three non-axial rays ✓ Both focal points labelled with common focus closer to eyepiece lens ✓ 	Allow MP2 only for axial ray diagram Condone missing arrows Condone missing construction line Treat 'focal length' as neutral. Insist that focal points are common and on principal axis.	2	AO1

<table>
<tr><th>Question</th><th>Answers</th><th>Additional comments/Guidance</th><th>Mark</th><th>AO</th></tr>
<tr>
<td>02.2</td>
<td>
The mark scheme gives some guidance as to what statements are expected to be seen in a 1- or 2-mark (L1), 3- or 4- mark (L2) and 5- or 6- mark (L3) answer. Guidance provided in section 3.10 of the 'Mark Scheme Instructions' document should be used to assist in marking this question.
<table>
<tr><th>Mark</th><th>Criteria</th></tr>
<tr><td>6</td><td>All three areas covered in some detail.
6 marks can be awarded even if there is an error and/or parts of one aspect missing.</td></tr>
<tr><td>5</td><td>A fair attempt to analyse all three areas. If there are several errors or missing parts then 5 marks should be awarded.</td></tr>
<tr><td>4</td><td>Two areas successfully discussed, or one discussed and two others covered partially. Whilst there will be gaps, there should only be an occasional error.</td></tr>
<tr><td>3</td><td>One area discussed and one discussed partially, or all three covered partially. There are likely to be several errors and omissions in the discussion.</td></tr>
<tr><td>2</td><td>Only one area discussed or makes a partial attempt at two areas.</td></tr>
<tr><td>1</td><td>None of the three areas covered without significant error.</td></tr>
</table>
</td>
<td>
Relative brightness (partial 1/2; full 2/2)
1. (Image formed by) B brighter than A (because B larger diameter than A) or B has a greater collecting power than A
2. Collecting power B $= 2.25 \times$ collecting power A
Show features (partial 1/ first 3; full = partial + 2/last 3)
1. (angular) resolution of B $>$ A or Resolution of B $= 1.5 \times$ A
2. Angular size of Mars $= 8.2 \times 10^{-5}$ rad
[allow 4.1×10^{-5} rad from radius]
3. Magnified A $= 25 \times 8.2 \times 10^{-5}$
$= 2.1 \times 10^{-3}$ rad and Magnified B
$= 40 \times 8.2 \times 10^{-5} = 3.3 \times 10^{-3}$ rad
or minimum angle resolvable with the eye using this telescope: A = 1.2×10^{-5} rad and B = 7.5×10^{-6} rad
4. Both better than resolution of eye
5. A can resolve separation 990 km (15% diameter of Mars) or B can resolve 620 km (9% diameter of Mars)
6. Images in B appear $1.6 \times$ larger than A
Aberrations (partial 1/3; full 3/3)
1. (Dispersion due to lenses so) A shows (more) chromatic aberration
2. Idea that the use of a parabolic mirror produces no spherical aberration with B
3. B better than A for aberrations.
</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2 × AO1
3 × AO2
1 × AO3</td>
</tr>
</table>

Question	Answers	Additional comments/Guidance	Mark	AO
02.3	Two from: ✓✓ • Better quantum efficiency and therefore more (of the incident) light/photons detected (per second) • Pixels smaller than rods/cones/retinal cells therefore better resolution • Detects light outside visible spectrum so more information / more (of the incident) light detected with CCD • Longer exposure (time) possible so more light/photons detected	If no other marks given: award **MAX 1** for two features / two advantages without explanation	Max 2	AO1
Total			**10**	

Question	Answers	Additional comments/Guidance	Mark	AO
03.1	Evidence of use of Hubble equation with H value from data booklet ✓ Evidence of conversion of unit for d OR H to give consistent units for *d* and *H* ✓ 1.1×10^6 (m s^{-1}) ✓	Condone POT error in MP1 e.g. for MP2 *d* in m and *H* in (k)ms^{-1} m^{-1} or *d* in (M)pc and *H* in (k)ms^{-1} (M)pc^{-1} *d* in ly and *H* in (k)ms^{-1} ly^{-1} etc. expect to see: $16(.3)$ Mpc for d Expect rounding to 1.06×10^6 (m s^{-1}) when ≥3 sf Note that incorrect use of 3.26 may appear as a POT error. In this case MP2 and MP3 are withheld	3	AO2

Question	Answers	Additional comments/Guidance	Mark	AO
03.2	One from: ✓ (idea of) very intense radio-wave emitter bright X-ray source	Condone ‘quasar’ or description of quasar Condone “jets” of (sources of) electromagnetic radiation Do not accept ‘γ-ray burst’	1	AO1

Question	Answers	Additional comments/Guidance	Mark	AO
03.3	Some type 1a supernovae are brighter than expected. ✓		1	AO1
Total			**5**	

Question	Answers	Additional comments/Guidance	Mark	AO
04.1	Correct substitution into $m - M = 5\log\left(\frac{d}{10}\right)$ or rearrangement for d ✓ Calculation for Aa1 $d = 380$ pc **AND** Calculation for Aa2 $d = 380$ pc **OR** $m - M = 7.9$ **stated** for both stars ✓ Statement that their two calculated distances are the same distance from Earth / away **OR** Statement that as $m - M$ is the same they must be the same distance from Earth / away ✓	$d = 380.189$ pc	3	AO2

Question	Answers	Additional comments/Guidance	Mark	AO
04.2	H **AND** He ✓	Reject when other elements given Reject when ions implied	1	AO1

Question	Answers	Additional comments/Guidance	Mark	AO
04.3	(Mintaka Aa1) Reference to O hotter than B ✓		1	AO1

Question	Answers	Additional comments/Guidance	Mark	AO
04.4	(idea that) when one star passes in front of the other the amount of light received changes / light intensity 'dips'. ✓ (idea that) the brightest (lowest value of) apparent magnitude occurs when both stars can be seen. ✓ **Max 1** from: ✓ • The difference in the 'dips' suggests that the stars have different temperatures / brightnesses. • The biggest change / **Q** is when the cooler/dimmer star is in front of the hotter/brighter / when Aa2 is in front of Aa1.	In MP3 do not condone "size / bigger / smaller" etc. unless they are linked to temperature / brightness Accept the converse for smallest change / **P**.	3	AO3

Question	Answers	Additional comments/Guidance	Mark	AO
04.5	$T \approx 5.7$ days. ✓ (Calculation of $\omega = \frac{2\pi}{T}$) $\omega = (\frac{2\pi}{5.7 \times 24 \times 60 \times 60} =) \ 1.3 \times 10^{-5}$ (rad s^{-1}) ✓	Range in T: 5.6 – 5.8 days Allow **MAX 1** for use of half of the time period. Accept $(1.25 – 1.30) \times 10^{-5}$ (rad s^{-1})	2	AO2
Total			**10**	

Question	Answers	Additional comments/Guidance	Mark	AO
05	Group **X**: Use of inverse-square law (to arrive at a value for I or d): $_1$✓ $(I \propto \frac{1}{d^2})$ (Ratio of intensities: $\frac{I_1}{I_2} = \frac{530^2}{548^2}$) $I_1 = 1.07\ I_2$ or $d = 511$ (ly) $_2$✓ Group **Y**: Use of $P \propto r^2$ (to arrive at a value of P_1 or r) $_3$✓ $(A = 4\pi r^2)$ (Ratio of power: Use of $\frac{P_1}{P_2} = \frac{750^2}{700^2}$ or alternative) leading to a calculation of $P_1 = 1.15\ P_2$ or $r = 75(0)r_\bullet$ $_4$✓ So Group **Y** could be correct AND Group **X** not correct. $_5$✓	Allow any subscripts, e.g. 1/2, x/y, etc. Allow conclusion to be drawn on basis of ratios When $I \propto \frac{r^2}{d^2}$ is seen and used, award $_1$✓ and $_3$✓. Expect k = 0.613. Accept I for P Alternative approach: When $2.51^{0.0725} = 1.07$ seen, award $_1$✓and $_2$✓. Some evidence of relevant working for both X and Y must be seen to award $_5$✓	5	AO3
Total			**5**	