Marking notation and practice (8 pages; 1/9/16)

(A) Types of mark

M (method) mark

Gained for attempting to apply a correct method.

The mark can often be gained where there is an error in the working, but it would sometimes depend on the seriousness of the error.

No mark would be awarded for simply stating the method: it has to be applied to the actual question.

eg "apply Newton's 2nd law" [and nothing further] $\Rightarrow$ M0

An M mark may sometimes be awarded if a correct method is 'implied' by the answer given; however it is a risky strategy to just write down the answer (even if it can be done in your head): examiners can always invoke the instruction on the exam paper to show sufficient working.

If an alternative (valid) method is used (ie one that doesn't appear in the mark scheme), then full credit should be given if it is correct.

For some exam boards, an M mark will be awarded if a formula is quoted and a mistake is made in applying it; whilst if the formula is **not** quoted, then the M mark is not awarded if there is a mistake in the working.

A (accuracy) mark

A mark dependent on the related M mark (ie it isn't possible to earn the A mark if the M mark has not been awarded).

Awarded for getting the final answer (or an intermediate step) right.

Failure to give a sensible number of significant figures or decimal places will result in an A0.

B mark [sometimes referred to as an independent mark, or an unconditional accuracy mark (B doesn't stand for anything!)]

A mark not dependent on an M mark (note though that B marks will not be awarded if an incorrect method is used and the correct answer is only arrived at by chance – see CWO).

E (explanation) mark

This may depend on an earlier A1 being earned (eg Proof by Induction); for this reason, you will usually be wasting your time by finishing an incomplete question with a phrase that you know often appears in the answer.

G (graph) mark

Mark for a correct feature on a graph. Marking of graphs can be quite harsh; eg a mark may only be awarded if **all** the asymptotes are approached correctly.

U (units) mark

Mark for correct units.

However, wrong or missing units in an answer would often not lose a mark.

(B) Abbreviations

(These may appear in the mark scheme, or may be used by the marker. Some are more obscure than others, and the following interpretations should be treated as suggestions, where the context would need to be considered as well.)

ACF/AEF

Any correct/equivalent form (of answer is equally acceptable).

AG

Answer given on the question paper (warning to the examiner!)

(This means that the working shown has to be convincing. The examiner will be on the lookout for 'fudging' or jumping to the correct answer too soon.)

[Sometimes ∗ is used instead of AG]

AWFW/AWRT

Anything which falls within/anything which rounds to ...

BOD

Benefit of doubt (eg if a candidate's writing can't be read easily, or if a curve is slightly dubious at an asymptote, or if full working is not shown.

There is usually a limit as to how much bod is granted for a particular question (eg if a curve has one minor error, then bod may be granted, but two minor errors might not be condoned).

c: candidate

CAO Correct answer only

Indicates that there is to be no following through (see FT).

CSO/CWO

Correct solution/working only (written by marker to indicate that a correct answer was arrived at by chance, and hence no mark is being awarded).

DEP*

Mark is dependent on having obtained the mark indicated by * (alternatively, DM* may indicate an M mark dependent on *)

For example, for Proof by Induction, E marks at the end will usually be dependent on earlier marks having been awarded.

FB: formulae book

FIW

From incorrect work (used by marker to explain why a mark hasn't been awarded)

FT

Indicates that an A or B mark may be awarded for work correctly following on from previously incorrect answers; usually in this case 1 mark is deducted.

However, credit will not usually be given if the incorrect answer used is obviously wrong (eg $sinx = 1.1$), or if the answer to the second part is itself obviously wrong (as this should prompt the candidate to go back and find the mistake).

[See also √]

ISW: Ignore subsequent working (written by marker). Or incorrect statement.

eg if a correct fraction is incorrectly rounded to a decimal (provided that a fractional answer is acceptable)

Note that if a candidate simply hedges their bets by writing down two answers, no marks will usually be awarded.

If it appears that two attempts have been made at a question, usually only the second one will be considered. See the notes on Crossings Out below.

MC/MR

Mis-copy/Mis-read: in some cases, credit may be given if the question has been misread or misunderstood, provided that the nature and difficulty of the question is not affected; one or two marks will be deducted though. The same leniency isn't however shown where you misread your own work.

NMS: no method shown (marker's comment)

NOS: not on scheme

OE: or equivalent

PA: premature approximation

resulting in basically correct work that is numerically insufficiently accurate

Usually a mark is deducted.

PI: possibly implied

RA: required accuracy

ROT: rounded or truncated

SC / SR: special case / special ruling

Sets out the marks to be awarded in the case of an alternative method, or where eg the candidate arrives at the correct answer without adequate working (in which case lower marks will be awarded), or in the case of a particular type of error.

SOI: seen or implied

SOS: see other solution

Marker's comment where a candidate makes a second attempt at a question).

WR: work replaced by candidate

WWW: without wrong working

Indicates that a mark will not be awarded if an answer is obtained fortuitously.

^ : indicates that something is missing (used by marker)

√ : correct follow through (used by marker)

−1 EE: deduct 1 mark for each error

∗ : answer given in question

(C) Crossings Out & Multiple Attempts

The usual policy is as follows:

(i) If work is crossed out but not replaced, it will be marked if legible (hence the instruction to cross out with a single line). (This assumes that there is no clash with the exam instructions (the 'rubric'); for example, requiring the candidate to only answer a certain number of questions.)

(ii) If a question is attempted more than once and the candidate indicates which version is to be used, then the examiner will follow this instruction.

(iii) If there are two or more attempts at a question and only one is not crossed out, then the one that isn't crossed out will be marked.

(iv) If there are two or more attempts at a question that haven't been crossed out (or if all attempts have been crossed out), then the examiner will mark what seems to be the last attempt (they could be written side-by-side!); however, if an earlier attempt appears to be more complete (eg if the candidate ran out of time on the last attempt), then this will be marked instead.

Note: Some boards adopt the practice of marking all such attempts, and giving the highest mark obtained.

(D) Miscellaneous

(1) Rounding: marks are not usually lost by giving more decimal places than stated in the mark scheme (unless, of course, the question specifies a certain number of decimal places or significant figures). However, in some cases, a mark may not be awarded if the entire calculator display is

written down as the answer (as this may indicate a lack of understanding).

Some exam boards will accept answers that agree with the mark scheme answer to 3 (sometimes 2) sig. figs. (again, assuming that there is no over-riding instruction).

(2) A2, B2 etc. means that either 2 or 0 marks is to be awarded; B2,1,0 means that 2, 1 or 0 marks can be awarded.

(3) ½ marks cannot be awarded