

CAMBRIDGE INTERNATIONAL AS & A LEVEL • PHYSICS 9702

Topical Questions

Unit 11: Nuclear Physics

Past Papers 2021 – 2025

MARK SCHEME 33 Questions

Prepared by

Waseem Ahmad

A Level Physics Teacher

Author of Practical Mastery: Cambridge 9702 Paper 3

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Question 1 — Mark Scheme

Question	Answer	Marks										
6(a)	α -particle mass given as $4u$	B1										
	α -particle charge given as $(+)2e$	B1										
	both β -particles mass given as $0.0005u$	B1										
	β^+ charge given as $(+)e$ and β^- charge given as $-e$	B1										
	(Completed table: <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th></th><th>mass / u</th><th>charge / e</th></tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>α</td><td>4</td><td>$(+)2$</td></tr> <tr> <td>β^+</td><td>0.0005</td><td>$(+)1$</td></tr> <tr> <td>β^-</td><td>0.0005</td><td>-1</td></tr> </tbody> </table>)			mass / u	charge / e	α	4	$(+)2$	β^+	0.0005	$(+)1$	β^-
	mass / u	charge / e										
α	4	$(+)2$										
β^+	0.0005	$(+)1$										
β^-	0.0005	-1										
6(b)(i)	neutron decays into proton and an electron / β^- particle	B1										
6(b)(ii)	down to up	B1										
6(b)(iii)	(electron) antineutrino(s) emitted	B1										
	energy (released in decay)/momentum shared between antineutrino and β^- particle	B1										

Question 2 — Mark Scheme

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Question	Answer	Marks
7(a)	(total) momentum before (decay) is zero or P has zero momentum	B1
	(total momentum after decay must be zero so) α -particle and Q have momenta in opposite directions (and therefore velocities are in opposite directions)	B1
7(b)	$p = 239 \text{ (u)} \times v$ or $4 \text{ (u)} \times 1.6 \times 10^7$	C1
	$239 \text{ (u)} \times v = 4 \text{ (u)} \times 1.6 \times 10^7$	A1
	$v = 2.7 \times 10^5 \text{ m s}^{-1}$	
7(c)	$E_{(K)} = \frac{1}{2}mv^2$	C1
	$= \frac{1}{2} \times 4 \times 1.66 \times 10^{-27} \times (1.6 \times 10^7)^2$	C1
	$= 8.5 \times 10^{-13} \text{ (J)}$	A1
	$= 8.5 \times 10^{-13} / 1.60 \times 10^{-13} \text{ (MeV)}$ $= 5.3 \text{ MeV}$	
7(d)(i)	1. R plotted at (95,147)	B1
	2. S plotted at (96,146)	B1
7(d)(ii)	(electron) <u>anti</u> neutrino	B1

Question 3 — Mark Scheme

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Question	Answer	Mark
6(a)(i)	(electron) neutrino	B1
6(a)(ii)	weak (nuclear force/interaction)	B1
6(a)(iii)	β^+ (particle)	B1
6(a)(iv)	(quark structure is) up up down or uud	B1
	$(2/3)e + (2/3)e - (1/3)e = (+)e$	B1
6(a)(v)	up up down changes to up down down or uud $\rightarrow$ udd or up changes to down or u $\rightarrow$ d	B1
6(b)(i)	$F = Eq$	C1
	ratio = $6/8$ = 0.75	A1
6(b)(ii)	ratio = $0.75 \times (16/12)$ = 1.0	A1
6(b)(iii)	horizontal straight line at a non-zero value of a	B1

Question 4 — Mark Scheme

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Question	Answer	Marks
6(a)	the nucleus is charged	B1
	the majority of the mass (of atom) is in the nucleus	B1
6(b)	made up of quarks (so) not a fundamental particle	B1
6(c)	(Q =) $6.9 \times 10^{-9} \times 60$	C1
	number = $(6.9 \times 10^{-9} \times 60) / (2 \times 1.60 \times 10^{-19})$	C1
	= 1.3×10^{12}	A1
6(d)	(magnitude of electric) force is constant	B1
	(so magnitude of) acceleration is constant	B1
6(e)	(nuclei have) same charge/same number of protons	B1
	(so) same (magnitude of) force	B1

Question 5 — Mark Scheme

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Question	Answer	Mark
7(a)(i)	most of the atom is empty space or the nucleus (volume) is very small <u>compared to the atom</u>	B1
7(a)(ii)	the nucleus is charged	B1
	the mass is <u>concentrated</u> in nucleus / small region / small volume / small core or the <u>majority</u> of the mass is in nucleus / small region / small volume / small core	B1
7(b)(i)	proton number = 84	A1
	nucleon number = 214	A1
7(b)(ii)	up down down changes to up up down / udd → uud or down changes to up / d → u	B1

Question 6 — Mark Scheme

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Question	Answer	Marks
6(a)	particle with no internal structure / particle which cannot be broken down into anything smaller	A1
6(b)	charges: $u = (+)\frac{2}{3}(e)$ or $d = -\frac{1}{3}(e)$ or $s = -\frac{1}{3}(e)$	C1
	$(+)\frac{2}{3}(e) - \frac{1}{3}(e) - \frac{1}{3}(e) = 0(e)$	A1
6(c)(i)	• same/equal mass • same/equal (magnitude of) charge • both fundamental (particles) • opposite (sign of) charge • one is matter and the other is antimatter <i>Any two points, 1 mark each.</i>	B2
6(c)(ii)	neutron/baryon consists of three quarks	B1
	pion/meson consists of one quark and one antiquark	B1

Question 7 — Mark Scheme

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Question	Answer	Marks
7(a)	92 protons and 146 neutrons (in nucleus)	B1
	92 (orbital) electrons	B1
7(b)	charge = $2e$ $(= 2 \times 1.60 \times 10^{-19} \text{ C})$	C1
	mass = $4u$ $(= 4 \times 1.66 \times 10^{-27} \text{ kg})$	C1
	ratio = $(2 \times 1.60 \times 10^{-19}) / (4 \times 1.66 \times 10^{-27})$ $= 4.8 \times 10^7 \text{ C kg}^{-1}$	A1
7(c)(i)	up down down / udd	B1
7(c)(ii)	up up up / uuu	B1

Question 8 — Mark Scheme

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Question	Answer	Marks
6(a)	${}_{7}^{14}\text{X}$	B1
	${}_{-1}^0\text{e}^{-}$	B1
6(b)(i)	$\text{d} \rightarrow \text{u} + \text{e}^{-} + \bar{\nu}$ or $\text{udd} \rightarrow \text{uud} + \text{e}^{-} + \bar{\nu}$	B1
6(b)(ii)	$-1/3 (e) = +2/3 (e) - 1(e) (+0)$ or $2/3 (e) - 1/3 (e) - 1/3 (e) = 2/3 (e) + 2/3 (e) - 1/3 (e) - 1(e) (+0)$	B1
6(c)(i)	electrons / β -particles (emitted from the nucleus) have a (continuous) range of / different (kinetic) energies	B1
6(c)(ii)	the (emitted) neutrinos take varying amounts of the (same total) energy (released in the decay)	B1

Question 9 — Mark Scheme

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Question	Answer	Marks
7(a)(i)	P = 0 and Q = 137	A1
	R = -1 and S = 56	A1
7(a)(ii)	lepton(s)	B1
7(b)(i)	(charge of ddd / Y =) $-\frac{1}{3}(e) - \frac{1}{3}(e) - \frac{1}{3}(e) = -1(e)$	B1
	(charge of $\bar{u}d$ / Z =) $-\frac{1}{3}(e) - \frac{2}{3}(e) = -1(e)$	B1
7(b)(ii)	meson: Z / $\bar{u}d$ because consists of a quark and an antiquark	B1
	baryon: Y / ddd because consists of three quarks	B1

Question 10 — Mark Scheme

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Question	Answer	Marks
7(a)(i)	${}^{18}_9\text{F} \rightarrow {}^{18}_8\text{O} + {}^0_{(+1)}\beta^{(+)} + {}^{(0)}_{(0)}\nu_{(e)}$ ν or neutrino (B1) ${}^0_{(+1)}\beta^{(+)}$ (B1) ${}^{18}_8\text{O}$ (B1)	B3
7(a)(ii)	up quark to down quark	B1
7(b)(i)	must be three (anti)quarks as largest (negative) quark charge is $(-)\frac{2}{3}$ (e) or mesons can only have a charge of 0 or ± 1 (e)	M1
	(so hadron is) a baryon	A1
7(b)(ii)	any combination of three from: antiup (quark) / up antiquark and/or anticharm (quark) / charm antiquark and/or antitop (quark) / top antiquark	B1

Question 11 — Mark Scheme

Question	Answer	Marks
7(a)(i)	(electron) neutrino	B1
7(a)(ii)	nucleon number = 22	A1
	proton number = 10	A1
7(a)(iii)	up up down changes to up down down or up changes to down	B1
7(b)(i)	charge = $-\frac{2}{3}e$	A1
7(b)(ii)	antiup / anticharm / antitop	B1

Question 12 — Mark Scheme

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Question	Answer	Mark
7(a)	a (very) small proportion of (alpha) particles are deflected (back) through large angles / angles greater than 90°	B1
	a large proportion of (alpha) particles pass straight through / deflected by small angles	B1
7(b)	electromagnetic wave / electromagnetic radiation	A1
7(c)	neutrino classified as a lepton only <u>and</u> positron classified as a lepton only	B1
	neutron classified as a baryon and a hadron and not as a lepton	B1
7(d)(i)	1.32 u	A1
7(d)(ii)	working states or implies 3 quarks and each quark has a charge of $(+)\frac{2}{3}(e)$	B1
	any combination of 3 quarks comprised of one or more of up / charm / top	B1

Question 13 — Mark Scheme

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Question	Answer	Marks
7(a)	only baryon and nucleon underlined	B1
7(b)	number of α -particles = 6	B1
	number of β^- particles = 4	B1
7(c)	charm antiquark (charge) = $-\frac{2}{3}(e)$ or $-\frac{2}{3}(e) + q = -1(e)$	B1
	(other quark $q = -\frac{1}{3}(e)$ so) down / strange / bottom	B1

Question 14 — Mark Scheme

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Question	Answer	Marks
8(a)(i)	23: nucleon number or number of neutrons and protons	B1
	12: proton number or number of protons	B1
8(a)(ii)	both numbers correct for X: ${}_{11}^{23}\text{X}$	B1
	both numbers correct for beta-plus: ${}^0_1\beta^+$	B1
8(a)(iii)	lepton(s)	A1
8(b)	(the emitted particles) have a single (kinetic) energy or beta particles / decay have a (continuous) range of (kinetic) energies	B1

Question 15 — Mark Scheme

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Question	Answer	Marks
8(a)(i)	Y and Z have equal numbers of protons and (so) they have the same charge	B1
8(a)(ii)	Y has (two) fewer protons (than X)	M1
	(so) Y has less charge (than X)	A1
8(b)	(total) momentum before decay is zero or X has zero / no momentum	B1
	(total momentum after decay must be zero so) Y must have equal (and opposite) momentum to α -particle (so cannot be stationary / must have speed/velocity)	B1

Question 16 — Mark Scheme

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Question	Answer	Marks
8(a)(i)	number of protons: equal/same	B1
	number of neutrons: unequal/different	B1
8(a)(ii)	down (quark) changes to up (quark) or up down down (quarks) change to up up down (quarks)	B1
8(a)(iii)	(electron) antineutrino	B1
8(b)	charm (quark charge) is $(+)2/3(e)$ or 2 charm (quark charges) is $(+)4/3(e)$ or bottom (quark charge) is $-1/3(e)$	C1
	charge = $+2/3(e) + 2/3(e) - 1/3(e)$ = $(+)1(e)$	A1

Question 17 — Mark Scheme

Question	Answer	Marks
7(a)	down charge = $-1/3(e)$ and charm charge = $(+2/3)(e)$	B1
	all antiquarks have opposite sign and same (non-zero) magnitude of charge as the corresponding quarks	B1
7(b)(i)	udd or cdd	B1
7(b)(ii)	$u\bar{d}$ or $c\bar{d}$	B1
7(c)(i)	lepton(s)	B1
7(c)(ii)	positron / neutrino / antineutrino	B1

Question 18 — Mark Scheme



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Question	Answer	Marks
6(c)(iv)	current in (fixed / variable) resistor decreases	B1
	current in (resistance) wire is unchanged	B1
	(so) current in battery decreases, (same e.m.f. so) power decreases	B1
Question	Answer	Marks
7(a)(i)	X has same number of protons as Y (and so) charge of X is the same as the charge of Y	B1
7(a)(ii)	X has (one) more proton (than Z)	M1
	(so) X has greater charge (than Z)	A1
7(b)(i)	meson(s)	B1
7(b)(ii)	one quark and one antiquark	B1

Question 19 — Mark Scheme

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Question	Answer	Marks
6(a)	mass of α (particle) is <u>much</u> greater (than β^+ particle)	B1
	both particles are positively charged	B1
	(magnitude of) charge on α (particle) is twice the charge (on β^+ particle)	B1
6(b)(i)	cross labelled Q at (82, 212)	B1
6(b)(ii)	particles emitted are: • beta-minus (particle) / electron • (electron) antineutrino either particle named	B1
	both particles named and no incorrect particles named	B1
6(c)(i)	$212(u) \times 1.3 (\times 10^5) \sin 68^\circ$ or $4(u) \times 150 (\times 10^5) \sin \theta$	C1
	$4(u) \times 150 (\times 10^5) \times \sin \theta = 212(u) \times 1.3 (\times 10^5) \times \sin 68^\circ$	C1
	$\sin \theta = 0.426$ $\theta = 25^\circ$	A1
6(c)(ii)	$E = \frac{1}{2}mv^2$	C1
	$= \frac{1}{2} \times 4 u \times (150 \times 10^5)^2$ $= \frac{1}{2} \times 4 \times 1.66 \times 10^{-27} \times (150 \times 10^5)^2$ $= 7.5 \times 10^{-13} \text{ J}$	A1

Question 20 — Mark Scheme

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Question	Answer	Marks
7(a)	up quark charge = $(+) \frac{2}{3}$ and down quark charge = $- \frac{1}{3}$	B1
	strange quark charge = $- \frac{1}{3}$	B1
	up antiquark charge = $- \frac{2}{3}$ and down antiquark charge = $(+) \frac{1}{3}$ and strange antiquark charge = $(+) \frac{1}{3}$	B1
7(b)(i)	hadron(s)	B1
7(b)(ii)	baryons composed of three quarks or baryons composed of three antiquarks	B1
	mesons composed of one quark and one antiquark	B1
7(c)	up quark changes to a down quark	B1
	positron and (electron) neutrino (emitted)	B1

Question 21 — Mark Scheme

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Question	Answer	Marks
7(a)	${}^{66}_{29}\text{Cu}$	B1
7(b)(i)	the energy of the decay is fixed / constant	B1
	the energies of the beta particles have a (continuous) range of values / varies / not constant	B1
	another particle / an (anti)neutrino must possess the extra / remaining energy (difference between energy of the decay and the β kinetic energy)	B1
7(b)(ii)	(electron) antineutrino	B1
7(b)(iii)	${}^{66}_{29}\text{Cu} \rightarrow {}^{66}_{30}\text{Zn} + {}^0_{-1}\beta + {}^0_0\overline{\nu}_e$ values for Cu and Zn correct with no other extra particles on either side of the equation	B1
	second term correct (${}^0_{-1}\beta$)	B1
	third term correct (${}^0_0\overline{\nu}_e$)	B1

Question 22 — Mark Scheme

Question	Answer	Marks
7(a)	meson(s) or hadron(s)	B1
7(b)	Q: anti-up or anti-charm or anti-top	B1
	R: up or charm or top	B1

Question 23 — Mark Scheme

Question	Answer	Marks
6(a)	${}_{62}^{147}\text{Sm}$	A1
6(b)(i)	the (kinetic) energy of the particles is discrete / has only one value (so must be alpha)	B1
	and beta particles have a (continuous) range of (kinetic) energies (so can't be beta)	B1
6(b)(ii)	${}_{62}^{147}\text{Sm} \rightarrow {}_{60}^{143}\text{Nd} + {}_2^4\alpha$ values for Sm and Nd correct with no other extra particles on either side of the equation	A1
	${}_2^4\alpha$ correct	A1
6(c)(i)	up quark charge is $+(2/3)$ (e) or bottom quark charge is $-(1/3)$ (e)	C1
	$0 = +(2/3) (e) - (1/3) (e) + q$ (so) charge (on third quark must be) $-(1/3) (e)$	A1
6(c)(ii)	down or strange	A1

Question 24 — Mark Scheme

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Question	Answer	Marks
8(a)	lepton(s)	B1
8(b)(i)	up or top or charm	B1
8(b)(ii)	meson(s)	B1
8(c)(i)	β^- (particle) or electron	B1
8(c)(ii)	equal	B1
8(c)(iii)	(the charge of) R is greater (than Q)	B1

Question 25 — Mark Scheme

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Question	Answer	Marks
6(a)(i)	numbers of protons and electrons both = 1	A1
	number of neutrons = 2	A1
6(a)(ii)	diagram shows 2 neutrons and 1 proton labelled and forming a nucleus	B1
	diagram shows 1 electron labelled and separated from the nucleus (not touching the proton and neutrons)	B1
6(b)(i)	helium nucleus: top line = 3 and bottom line = 2	A1
	beta particle: top line = 0 and bottom line = -1	A1
6(b)(ii)	(electron) antineutrino	B1
6(c)	proton: up up down or neutron: up down down	C1
	(tritium:) 4 up, 5 down	A1

Question 26 — Mark Scheme

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Question	Answer	Marks
6(a)	(a particle that) cannot be divided / subdivided (into smaller particles)	B1
6(b)(i)	any combination of one quark and one antiquark	C1
	up / charm / top and antiup / anticharm / antitop or down / strange / bottom and antidown / antistrange / antibottom	A1
6(b)(ii)	$E_{(K)} = \frac{1}{2} mv^2$	C1
	$2.1 \times 10^{-16} = \frac{1}{2} \times 0.67 \times 1.66 \times 10^{-27} \times v^2$	C1
	$v = 6.1 \times 10^5 \text{ m s}^{-1}$	A1
6(c)(i)	number of electrons = 88	A1
6(c)(ii)	(number of nucleons = $228 - 5 \times 4 = 208$) number of protons = $88 - (5 \times 2) + 4$ = 82	A1
	number of neutrons = $208 - 82 = 126$ = 126	A1

Question 27 — Mark Scheme

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Question	Answer	Marks
6(a)(i)	numbers of protons and electrons both = 1	A1
	number of neutrons = 2	A1
6(a)(ii)	diagram shows 2 neutrons and 1 proton labelled and forming a nucleus	B1
	diagram shows 1 electron labelled and separated from the nucleus (not touching the proton and neutrons)	B1
6(b)(i)	helium nucleus: top line = 3 and bottom line = 2	A1
	beta particle: top line = 0 and bottom line = –1	A1
6(b)(ii)	(electron) antineutrino	B1
6(c)	proton: up up down or neutron: up down down	C1
	(tritium:) 4 up, 5 down	A1

Question 28 — Mark Scheme

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Question	Answer	Marks
6(a)(i)	W deflects upwards	B1
	W has deflection that is the mirror image of X	B1
	Y deflects downwards less than X or path of Y is parallel to particle Z	B1
6(a)(ii)	nucleus has most of the mass of the atom or nucleus is charged	B1
6(a)(iii)	atom is mostly empty space or nucleus occupies a <u>very</u> small proportion of the space in the atom	B1
6(b)	mass = 4 u	A1
	charge = (+)2e	A1
6(c)(i)	baryon	B1
6(c)(ii)	charge on up quark = $(+)\frac{2}{3}(e)$ and charge on down quark = $-\frac{1}{3}(e)$	C1
	(proton is up up down and neutron is up down down) $\left(2 \times \frac{2}{3}\right)e - \left(1 \times \frac{1}{3}\right)e = 1e$ and $\left(1 \times \frac{2}{3}\right)e - \left(2 \times \frac{1}{3}\right)e = 0$	A1

Question 29 — Mark Scheme

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Question	Answer	Marks								
7(a)	$^{12}_7\text{N} \rightarrow ^{12}_6\text{C} + ^0_1\beta^+ + ^{(0)}_{(0)}\text{n}$	B1								
	beta-plus shown									
	neutrino shown	B1								
	symbols, nucleon numbers and proton numbers all correct	B1								
7(b)(i)	+1	B1								
7(b)(ii)	Lepton(s)	B1								
7(b)(iii)	<table><tr><td>flavour</td><td>charge / e</td></tr><tr><td>up / u</td><td>$-\frac{2}{3}$</td></tr><tr><td>up / u</td><td>$-\frac{2}{3}$</td></tr><tr><td>down / d</td><td>$(+)\frac{1}{3}$</td></tr></table>	flavour	charge / e	up / u	$-\frac{2}{3}$	up / u	$-\frac{2}{3}$	down / d	$(+)\frac{1}{3}$	
	flavour	charge / e								
	up / u	$-\frac{2}{3}$								
	up / u	$-\frac{2}{3}$								
	down / d	$(+)\frac{1}{3}$								
3 correct quark flavours	B1									
Charge on anti-up quark $-\frac{2}{3}(e)$	B1									
Charge on anti-down quark $(+)\frac{1}{3}(e)$	B1									

Question 30 — Mark Scheme

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Question	Answer	Marks
7(a)	(a particle that) cannot be divided/subdivided (into smaller particles)	B1
7(b)(i)	$(p \times e) / (14u) = 4.1 \times 10^7$	C1
	$p = (4.1 \times 10^7 \times 14 \times 1.66 \times 10^{-27}) / (1.60 \times 10^{-19})$	C1
	$p = 6$ (answer should be an integer)	A1
7(b)(ii)	${}^{14}_6\text{X} \rightarrow {}^{14}_7\text{Z}$	B1
	${}^0_{-1}\text{e}^{(-)}$ or ${}^0_{-1}\beta^{(-)}$	B1
	${}^0_0\bar{\nu}_{(e)}$	B1
7(c)	(the nuclei are undergoing) β^+ decay	B1
	A correct explanation in terms of charge and a correct explanation in terms of energy Explanations in terms of charge: • (particles / decay) positively charged so cannot be β^- • (particles / decay) positively charged so could be / is β^+ • β^- (particles / decay) are negatively charged • β^+ (particles / decay) are positively charged Explanations in terms of energy: • range of energies so not α (particles / decay) • range of energies so is β (particles / decay) • β (particles / decay) have a range of energies • α (particles / decay) have discrete energies / not range of energies	B1

Question 31 — Mark Scheme

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Question	Answer		Marks
8(a)	flavour	charge / e	
	up / u	$-\frac{2}{3}$	
	down / d	$(+)\frac{1}{3}$	
	down / d	$(+)\frac{1}{3}$	
	3 correct quark flavours		B1
	Charge on anti-up quark $-\frac{2}{3}(e)$		B1
	Charge on anti-down quark $(+)\frac{1}{3}(e)$		B1
8(b)	particle: (electron) neutrino		B1
	antiparticle: positron		B1

Question 32 — Mark Scheme

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Question	Answer	Marks
7(a)	• (electron) neutrino • (electron) antineutrino • electron • positron Any two, 1 mark each	B2
7(b)	only meson <u>and</u> neutron are underlined	B1
7(c)	(quark composition is) up, up, down / uud	B1
	(charge =) $\frac{2}{3}e + \frac{2}{3}e - \frac{1}{3}e = (+1)e = (+) 1.6 \times 10^{-19} \text{ (C)}$ or (charge =) $1.07 \times 10^{-19} + 1.07 \times 10^{-19} - 5.33 \times 10^{-20} = (+) 1.6 \times 10^{-19} \text{ (C)}$	A1

Question 33 — Mark Scheme

Question	Answer	Marks
7(a)	nucleon number of Q = 226 <u>and</u> proton number of R = 86	B1
7(b)	$4(u) \times 1.5 \times 10^7$ or $222(u) \times v$	C1
	$v = 4(u) \times 1.5 \times 10^7 / 222(u)$	C1
	$= 2.7 \times 10^5 \text{ m s}^{-1}$	A1

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Question	Answer	Marks
7(c)	Any three from: • momentum • charge • nucleon number • neutron number • proton number	B3

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