OXFORD AQA
INTERNATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS

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OxfordAQA International GCSE

CORE Biology (9221)

Specimen paper information

For teaching from September 2025 onwards
For International GCSE exams in June 2026 onwards

INTRODUCTION

This document details the subject content assessed in the specimen paper for the International GCSE CORE Biology specification 9221.

The purpose of this information is to support teaching and revision. It is provided in the context of this specimen paper being released for schools to use as a mock examination in May 2025.

MOCK EXAM PREPARATION

OxfordAQA is providing information on the focus of the content of the upcoming specimen papers for the GCSE CORE subjects. The purpose of this information is to support teaching and revision in preparing students ahead of sitting the specimen papers as internal mock examinations.

The materials may be shared with students and referred to at any point from the date of release. However, we do not advise that students bring these materials into their mock examinations.

WHAT ARE THE KEY PRINCIPLES TO THIS INFORMATION?

- We have avoided providing too much detail, so that students don't attempt to pre-prepare responses.
- We have made sure this information does not:
    - directly provide answers to any questions
    - compromise the capability of mock examinations to sufficiently differentiate between student performance.

HOW AND WHEN SHOULD THIS INFORMATION BE USED?

- It can be used as soon as the information is released.
- It can be used flexibly by centres to support student revision and exam preparation. You may choose to allow students to access to this information before their mock examination to focus their revision and mock examination preparation.
- We advise against bringing this information into the mock examination.

INFORMATION

- The information is presented in specification order and not in question order.
- The format/structure of the paper is as follows: 100 marks, 1 hour 45 minutes, structured and open questions assessing the four assessment objectives and selected elements of the maths skills and practical skills as listed in the specification.

ADVICE

- The following areas of content are suggested as key areas of focus for revision and final preparation, in relation to GCSE CORE specimen paper.
- Topics not assessed directly in questions have been listed.
- Assessment of practical skills and maths skills will occur throughout the specimen paper.
- Students will be expected to apply their knowledge to unfamiliar contexts.

PAPER 1 – 100 marks, 1 hour 45 minutes

The table shows the major focus of the content of the specimen paper.

For schools currently teaching Cambridge iGCSE Biology (0610 or 0970) Core Tier, any major subject content differences assessed within the paper have been highlighted in the third column:

Topic heading	Content assessed	Does the content assessed appear in Cambridge iGCSE Biology Core tier?	Marks*
Cell structure	3.1.1a, b	Yes	3
Transport in cells	3.1.5d, e, RPA1	Yes	11
Photosynthesis	3.2.1a	Yes	2
Circulation in humans	3.2.3j, k, l, n, o, p	3.2.3 n has some content not in the Cambridge specification	11
Digestion	3.2.4a, b, c	Yes	10
Respiration	3.2.6a, b, g, i, j, RPA4	3.2.6 g, l, j has some supplement content and some content not in the Cambridge specification	14
Energy transferred in ecosystems	3.3.1b	Yes	5
Decay and the carbon cycle	3.3.3a, b, e	3.3.3 b has some content not in the Cambridge specification	13
Control of blood glucose	3.4.5a, b, c, d, e	Some supplement content and some content not in the Cambridge specification	10
Cell division	3.5.2d	Supplement content in the Cambridge specification	1
Genetic variation	3.5.3a, f, g	3.5.3 a has some content not in the Cambridge specification	7
Genetic manipulation	3.5.5b, c, d, e	Supplement content in the Cambridge specification	13
Natural selection	3.6.2a, b	Some supplement content and some content not in the Cambridge specification	11

* The specimen paper is 100 marks total, however some questions are designed to cover multiple topics so this table includes more than 100 marks.

REQUIRED PRACTICAL THAT WILL BE ASSESSED

- Required practical 1: Investigate the effect of different concentrations of solutions separated by a semi permeable membrane
- Required practical 4: Investigate the effects of exercise on the human body.
- Control variables are assessed in this paper

TOPICS NOT DIRECTLY ASSESSED IN THE SPECIMEN PAPER FROM THIS SPECIFICATION

3.1.2 Principles of organisation

3.1.3 Animal tissues, organs and systems

3.1.4 Plant tissues, organs and systems

3.2.2 Exchange and transport in plants

3.2.5 Breathing

3.3.2 Adaptations, interdependence and competition

3.3.4 Humans and their effects on the environment

3.4.1 The human nervous system

3.4.2 Homeostasis

3.4.3 Control of water and ion content of the body

3.4.4 Temperature control

3.4.7 Infection and response

3.5.1 Reproduction

3.5.4 Genetic disorders

3.6.1 Continuous and discontinuous variation