AQA GCSE Combined Science - Trilogy | 8464

SPECIFICATION POINT 5.9.3.2

Properties and effects of atmospheric pollutants

Mark schemes and examiner comments

Tier	**Foundation**
Question groups	**7**
Available paper years	**2018–2025**

Using this booklet

1. Booklet answer numbers match the question booklet.
2. Use the original question number within marking tables.
3. Examiner comments are included where available.

Name: _____ **Date:** _____

Where a precise marking extract is unavailable, the full source document is included in an appendix. Any missing mark scheme is explicitly identified.

5.9.3.2 Properties and effects of atmospheric pollutants

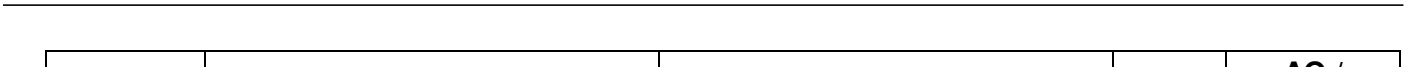
Answer 01 · Mark scheme June 2018 | 8464/C/2F | Original Q1

Question	Answers	Extra information	Mark	AO / Spec. Ref.
01.1	16		1	AO2 5.1.1.5
01.2	8 e^- in 2nd shell 6 e^- in 3rd shell	allow ●, x ,e^- or any combination	1	AO2 5.1.1.7
01.3	oxygen → sulfur dioxide	allow = in place of → do **not** accept sulfur oxide ignore symbols	1	AO2 5.1.1.1 5.9.3.1
01.4	acid rain		1	AO1 5.9.3.2
01.5	yes / no any **two** from: • increases • constant • decreases correct date range for any one of the above • (increases) 1984–1987 • (constant) 1987–1990 • (decreases) 1990–2014	 allow goes up allow similar allow goes down allow levels off (at the end)	 2 1	 AO3 5.9.3.1 AO2 5.9.3.1
01.6	(69 + 6 =) 75 100 – 75 = 25(%)	an answer of 25(%) scores **2** marks allow a final percentage calculated from an incorrect value in the first step	 1 1	AO2 5.9.3.1
Total			**9**	

5.9.3.2 Properties and effects of atmospheric pollutants

Answer 01 · Mark scheme

June 2018 | 8464/C/2F | Original Q1



5.9.3.2 Properties and effects of atmospheric pollutants

Answer 02 · Mark scheme

June 2018 | 8464/C/2F | Original Q6

Question	Answers	Extra information	Mark	AO / Spec. Ref.
06.1	condenses		1	AO1 5.7.1.2
06.2	the fractions have different boiling points		1	AO1 5.7.1.2 5.7.1.3
06.3	propane	do **not** accept propene	1	AO2 5.7.1.1
06.4	C_nH_{2n+2}		1	AO1 5.7.1.1
06.5	$CH_4 + \mathbf{2}\ O_2 \rightarrow CO_2 + \mathbf{2}\ H_2O$	allow multiples	1	AO2 5.1.1.1 5.7.1.3
06.6	bromine water		1	AO1 5.7.1.4
06.7	to assess the environmental impact (of the stages in the life of a product)	allow to see the effect / harm / damage on the Earth / environment / planet ignore references to energy, pollution, carbon footprint, carbon dioxide, sustainability	1	AO1 5.10.2.1

5.9.3.2 Properties and effects of atmospheric pollutants

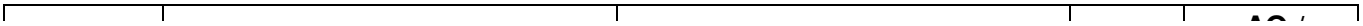
Answer 02 · Mark scheme

Question	Answers	Mark	AO / Spec. Ref.
06.8	**Level 2:** Scientifically relevant features are identified; the ways in which they are similar / different is made clear and the magnitude of the similarity / difference noted.	3–4	AO3
	Level 1: Relevant features are identified and differences noted.	1–2	AO2
	No relevant content	0	
	Indicative content • burning 10 000 bags produces 10 kg more of carbon dioxide than landfill • putting 10 000 bags in landfill produces 0.02 kg more of solid residue than burning. • putting 10 000 bags in landfill produces 50% more sulfur dioxide than burning • burning 10 000 bags produces 25 kg of carbon dioxide, but landfill only produces15 kg • putting 10 000 bags in landfill produces 0.07 kg of solid residue but burning only produces 0.05 kg • landfill produces less carbon dioxide than burning • landfill produces more solid residue than burning • burning produces less sulfur dioxide than landfill		5.10.2.1 5.10.2.2 5.9.2.2
Total			**11**

5.9.3.2 Properties and effects of atmospheric pollutants

Answer 02 · Mark scheme

June 2018 | 8464/C/2F | Original Q6



5.9.3.2 Properties and effects of atmospheric pollutants

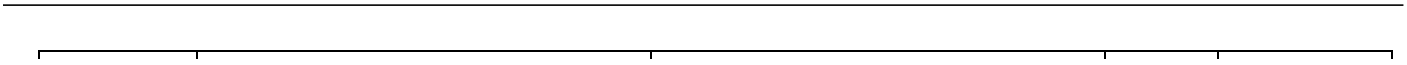
Answer 03 · Mark scheme

Question	Answers	Extra information	Mark	AO / Spec. Ref.
02.1	bar drawn to 54 (%)	allow a tolerance of ± ½ a small square	1	AO2 5.9.3.1
02.2	city centre		1	AO3 5.3.1.4 5.9.3.1
02.3	less traffic (because) fewer people working	allow fewer lorries / cars allow (because) no school allow (because) businesses / factories closed	1 1	AO3 5.9.3.1
02.4	(mean =) $\frac{35 + 37 + 37 + 34 + 37}{5}$ = 36 (arbitrary units)		1 1	AO2 5.9.3.1
02.5	catalysts are **not** used up in a reaction catalysts lower the activation energy of a reaction		1 1	AO1 5.6.1.4
02.6	finite resource		1	AO2 5.8.1.2 5.10.1.1
02.7	limewater		1	AO1 5.8.2.3
Total			**10**	

5.9.3.2 Properties and effects of atmospheric pollutants

Answer 03 · Mark scheme

November 2021 | 8464/C/2F | Original Q2

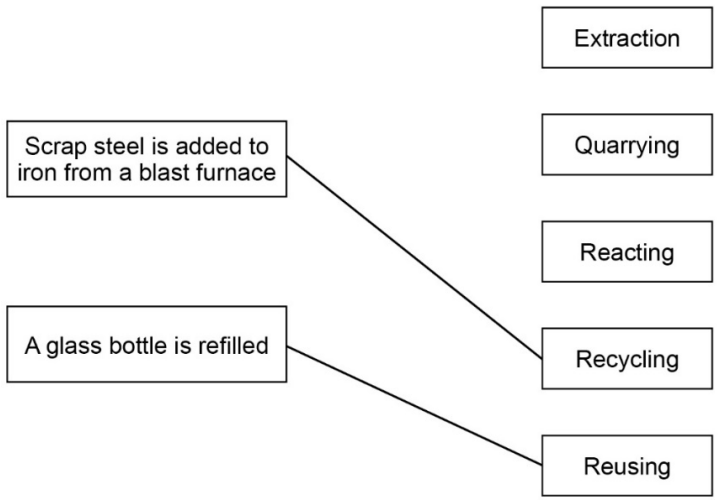


5.9.3.2 Properties and effects of atmospheric pollutants

Answer 04 · Mark scheme November 2021 | 8464/C/2F | Original Q5

Question	Answers	Extra information	Mark	AO / Spec. Ref.
05.1	as population increased, copper production increased		1	AO3 5.10.1.1
05.2	(copper ore) (70 × 100 =) 7000 (recycled copper) (27×100 =) 2700 (7000 – 2700 =) 4300 (MJ)	 allow correct use of incorrectly determined values for MP1 (copper ore) and/or MP2 (recycled copper)	1 1 1	AO2 5.10.2.2
05.3	any **one** from: • reduces acid rain • reduces respiratory problems (in humans)	 allow sulfur dioxide causes acid rain allow sulfur dioxide causes respiratory problems (in humans)	1	AO1 5.9.3.2
05.4	$\frac{75}{100}$ × 8 = 6 (g)		1 1	AO2 5.10.1.1

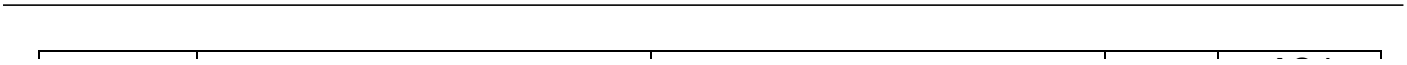
5.9.3.2 Properties and effects of atmospheric pollutants

05.5	 do **not** accept more than one line from a box on the left	1 1	AO2 5.10.2.2
05.6	**B**, **C**, **D**, **A**	1	AO1 5.10.2.2
Total		**10**	

5.9.3.2 Properties and effects of atmospheric pollutants

Answer 04 · Mark scheme

November 2021 | 8464/C/2F | Original Q5



5.9.3.2 Properties and effects of atmospheric pollutants

Answer 05 · Mark scheme

June 2023 | 8464/C/2F | Original Q5

Question 5

Question	Answers	Extra information	Mark	AO / Spec. Ref.
05.1	$CH_4 + \mathbf{2}\,O_2 \rightarrow CO_2 + \mathbf{2}\,H_2O$		1	AO2 5.7.1.3

Question	Answers	Extra information	Mark	AO / Spec. Ref.
05.2	hydrocarbon molecules in petrol have fewer carbon atoms than those in diesel petrol has a lower boiling point (range) than diesel	allow converse throughout allow petrol is more flammable than diesel allow petrol is less viscous than diesel	1 1	AO3 5.7.1.3

Question	Answers	Extra information	Mark	AO / Spec. Ref.
05.3	oxygen		1	AO1 5.8.1.2

Question	Answers	Extra information	Mark	AO / Spec. Ref.
05.4	air	allow the atmosphere allow from volcanoes	1	AO1 5.9.1.1 5.9.3.1

Question	Answers	Extra information	Mark	AO / Spec. Ref.
05.5	global dimming		1	AO2 5.9.3.1

5.9.3.2 Properties and effects of atmospheric pollutants

Question	Answers	Extra information	Mark	AO / Spec. Ref.
05.6	(carbon monoxide is) colourless **or** (carbon monoxide is) odourless	ignore clear	1	AO1 5.9.3.2

Question	Answers	Extra information	Mark	AO / Spec. Ref.
05.7	(diesel) burns at a high temperature **or** (diesel) burns at a temperature greater than 100 °C		1	AO2
	(which is) above the boiling point of water		1	AO3 5.2.2.1 5.9.3.1

Question	Answers	Extra information	Mark	AO / Spec. Ref.
05.8	sulfur dioxide (is produced when diesel is burnt)		1	AO1 5.9.3.1 5.9.3.2
	(which causes) acid rain		1	
	(which results in) any **one** from: • damage to buildings / statues / bridges • damage to trees / plants • damage to aquatic life • acidification of lakes / rivers / soil • respiratory problems	allow (which affects) asthma	1	

Total Question 5	**12**

5.9.3.2 Properties and effects of atmospheric pollutants

Answer 06 · Mark scheme

June 2025 | 8464/C/2F | Original Q3

Question 3

Question	Answers	Extra information	Mark	AO / Spec. Ref.
03.1	formulation		1	AO1 5.8.1.2

Question	Answers	Extra information	Mark	AO / Spec. Ref.
03.2	14		1	AO2 5.1.1.1 5.8.1.2

Question	Answers	Extra information	Mark	AO / Spec. Ref.
03.3	carbon monoxide is a toxic gas		1	AO1 5.9.3.2

Question	Answers	Extra information	Mark	AO / Spec. Ref.
03.4	$2\,CH_4O + 3\,O_2 \rightarrow 2CO_2 + 4\,H_2O$	allow multiples	1	AO2 5.1.1.1 5.3.1.1 5.7.1.3

Question	Answers	Extra information	Mark	AO / Spec. Ref.
03.5	(test) add a burning splint (result) (hydrogen burns with) a pop sound	do **not** accept glowing splint MP2 is dependent on MP1 being awarded	1 1	AO1 5.8.2.1

5.9.3.2 Properties and effects of atmospheric pollutants

Answer 06 · Mark scheme

Question	Answers	Extra information	Mark	AO / Spec. Ref.
03.6	any **two** from: • melting ice caps • rising sea levels • more flooding • extremes of weather • increase in droughts • increase in wildfires • loss of habitats • reduction in biodiversity • change in migration patterns	allow increase in frequency of storms allow desertification ignore global warming do **not** accept acid rain do **not** accept global dimming do **not** accept deforestation do **not** accept natural disasters do **not** accept references to ozone	2	AO1 5.9.2.3

Question	Answers	Extra information	Mark	AO / Spec. Ref.
03.7	colour change (from blue to pink)		1	AO2 5.6.2.2

Question	Answers	Extra information	Mark	AO / Spec. Ref.
03.8	endothermic	allow (thermal) decomposition	1	AO2 5.6.2.2

Total Question 3	**10**

5.9.3.2 Properties and effects of atmospheric pollutants

Answer 07 · Mark scheme

June 2025 | 8464/C/2F | Original Q6

Question 6

Question	Answers	Extra information	Mark	AO / Spec. Ref.
06.1	(test) glowing splint (result) relights	do **not** accept burning / lit splint allow glows more brightly MP2 is dependent upon MP1 being awarded	1 1	AO1 5.8.2.2

5.9.3.2 Properties and effects of atmospheric pollutants

Answer 07 · Mark scheme

Question	Answers	Mark	AO / Spec. Ref.
06.2	**Level 3:** Relevant points (reasons / causes) are identified, given in detail and logically linked to form a clear account.	5–6	AO1
	Level 2: Relevant points (reasons / causes) are identified, and there are attempts at logical linking. The resulting account is not fully clear.	3–4	AO1
	Level 1: Points are identified and stated simply, but their relevance is not clear and there is no attempt at logical linking.	1–2	AO3
	No relevant content	0	5.9.1.1 5.9.1.2 5.9.1.3 5.9.1.4
	Indicative content • **the percentage of carbon dioxide has decreased** ○ (because) carbon dioxide dissolved in the oceans ○ forming sediments ○ (because) algae / plants ○ photosynthesised ○ by the formation of sedimentary rocks ○ by the formation of fossil fuels • **the percentage of nitrogen has increased** ○ (because) volcanic activity produced nitrogen ○ denitrifying bacteria released nitrogen • **the percentage of oxygen has increased** ○ (because) algae / plants ○ photosynthesised for **Level 3** answers must include each of the gases with an explanation for different gases		

5.9.3.2 Properties and effects of atmospheric pollutants

Question	Answers	Extra information	Mark	AO / Spec. Ref.
06.3	any **two** from: • reduce livestock farming • reduce the number of rice / paddy fields • reduce the amount of rubbish going to landfill • use methane from landfill as an energy source • reduce fossil fuel use • reduce the destruction of peat bogs	 allow reduction of specific animals / product allow reduce area of wetlands allow recycle more (so less rubbish to landfill)	2	AO1 5.9.2.2 5.9.2.4

Question	Answers	Extra information	Mark	AO / Spec. Ref.
06.4	fossil fuels (containing sulfur) are burnt sulfur reacts with oxygen (to produce sulfur dioxide)	allow fuels containing sulfur are burnt	1 1	AO1 5.9.3.1

Question	Answers	Extra information	Mark	AO / Spec. Ref.
06.5	any **one** from: • respiratory problems • acid rain	 allow immediate consequence of acid rain	1	AO1 5.9.3.2

5.9.3.2 Properties and effects of atmospheric pollutants

Answer 07 · Mark scheme

Question	Answers	Extra information	Mark	AO / Spec. Ref.
06.6	any **one** from: • less use of fossil fuels (containing sulfur) • sulfur is removed from fossil fuels (before burning) • sulfur dioxide is removed from waste gases (after burning) • new legislation / regulations (since 1980)	allow any named fossil fuel allow less use of fuels containing sulfur allow increased use of renewable energy allow increased use of electric vehicles	1	AO3 5.9.3.1

Total Question 6	14

5.9.3.2 Properties and effects of atmospheric pollutants

Answer 03 · Examiner comments November 2021 | 8464/C/2F | Original Q2

Question 2 (low and standard demand)

This was a skills-based question and most students were able to draw a bar chart and calculate a mean. Only around half of the students gained full marks in the mean calculation as they determined the mean for the full week rather than Monday to Friday as required.

Many students appreciated that pollution levels were lower at the weekend but did not give a reason, or link this to reduced traffic levels for the second mark.

Answer 04 · Examiner comments November 2021 | 8464/C/2F | Original Q5

Question 5 (low and standard demand)

The interpretation of data and the associated calculations were generally well done, and many students scored highly on this question. The exception was question 05.3, where no credit was given for sulfur dioxide being toxic or harmful, as these are not the most significant reasons for reducing the global emissions of the gas.

Answer 05 · Examiner comments June 2023 | 8464/C/2F | Original Q5

Question 5

05.1 Around a third of students successfully balanced the equation. Having to balance two numbers in the equation led to many students trying to add other atoms, usually C and/or H to the equation.

05.2 One in five students gained both marks for comparing petrol and diesel. A further third gained one mark. On this occasion, students needed to interpret what the table headings meant, so many were not able to gain credit as they referred to the range of numbers of carbons, rather than the number of carbons and similarly, though more infrequent, for the boiling points.

05.3 Three in five students identified oxygen as the common element in the compounds released from a car engine.

05.4 Only 15% of students were able to identify that nitrogen came from the air. Much more common suggestions were from the engine or the diesel fuel.

05.5 This question tested a little known part of the specification, with fewer than one in twenty identifying global dimming as a consequence of particulates in the atmosphere. By far the most common incorrect response was for global warming.

05.6 Just below half of students could answer that carbon monoxide is either colourless or odourless. Many students gave both, despite being asked for one.

05.7 Fewer than one in ten gained any marks on this question, which was applying ideas from across the specification. Just a statement that water evaporates was insufficient for credit, as there needed to be a realisation that water is produced as a vapour, rather than turning into a vapour during the process.

5.9.3.2 Properties and effects of atmospheric pollutants

Answer 05 · Examiner comments June 2023 | 8464/C/2F | Original Q5

05.8 Around one in ten students gained at least one mark on this question, usually for recognising that sulfur is responsible for acid rain. The consequences of acid rain were not well known, and even fewer knew that sulfur enters the atmosphere as sulfur dioxide. Global warming was the most common incorrect response.

Answer 06 · Examiner comments June 2025 | 8464/C/2F | Original Q3

Question 3 (Low and Standard demand)

03.1 Well over half of all students recognised screenwash as a formulation.

03.2 Nearly three quarters of students were able to work out the number of atoms in one molecule of glycerol correctly as 14.

03.3 Most students could state that carbon monoxide is a toxic gas. The most common incorrect response was that carbon monoxide is a greenhouse gas.

03.4 Many students were able to correctly balance the equation. A significant number however incorrectly added an H or CH in front of the CO_2
There was clear evidence of many pupils working out the numbers of individual atoms to correctly balance the equation.

03.5 Many students remembered that hydrogen burns with a pop or squeaky pop however far fewer identified that a burning/lit splint was needed in order for that to happen, therefore neither mark could be awarded.

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5.9.3.2 Properties and effects of atmospheric pollutants

Answer 06 · Examiner comments

June 2025 | 8464/C/2F | Original Q3

The most common incorrect response referred to using a glowing splint, confusing the test for oxygen and hydrogen.
When students correctly identified a burning/lit splint as the correct test, most also then went on to state the correct result and gained both marks.

03.6 Many students were able to correctly give one effect of global climate change, but fewer were able to correctly give two. The most common creditworthy responses were for identifying 'melting ice caps' and 'rising sea levels'.
Many responses referring to floods, storms and wildfires but could not gain credit as they were not comparative. The question was looking for the idea that there would be '*more* floods' for example, as floods happen without climate change.
Very few students answered in terms of a reduction in biodiversity or changes to migration patterns.

03.7 Many students correctly recognised that the anhydrous cobalt chloride would change colour or described the correct colour change. Incorrect responses often referred to the water or solution changing colour, or included additional observations, such as 'fizzing' or 'bubbles'.

03.8 Many students correctly identified the type of reaction as being endothermic.

5.9.3.2 Properties and effects of atmospheric pollutants

Answer 07 · Examiner comments June 2025 | 8464/C/2F | Original Q6

Question 6 (Standard demand)

06.1 The test for oxygen was not well known, there were a lot of blank scripts. Those who did attempt the question often referred to lit or burning splints, or sometimes both glowing and lit together. Also, a significant number of students referred to smouldering splints, or splints that had been previously lit as opposed to a glowing splint. This standard test needs to reference 'glowing'. A splint that has been previously lit and then blown out is not equivalent.
The most common incorrect response was students attempting to describe the test for hydrogen, with students referencing the squeaky pop test.

06.2 This was an 'extended response' style of question. Such questions are marked holistically. There are overall generic descriptions for the three levels of response at the top of the mark scheme, giving a hierarchy of response. Within each level there are 2 marks.

Simply quoting the data from the table was not creditworthy. Students who did not use comparative language, such as higher, lower, only or just, to compare percentages failed to gain credit. Quoted figures needed to be correct.

Simple comparative statements limited the student to Level 1.

To access Level 2, the student had to offer at least two comparisons of percentage composition along with some correctly linked explanations, although all three gases did not have to be addressed.

To access Level 3 students had to correctly identify the change in percentage composition for all three gases from the early atmosphere to the current day and explain at least two of them.

Many students simply copied out the given information and therefore failed to gain any marks. The majority of the responses were in Level 1, as students failed to explain how the changes that they had described, came about. Where they did, contradictions were made, and the credit was disqualified. Where credit was given, it was mainly as a result of a description of plants photosynthesising.

A significant number of students attempted to explain the changes in terms of climate change and the burning of fossil fuels, increased transport and pollution.

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5.9.3.2 Properties and effects of atmospheric pollutants

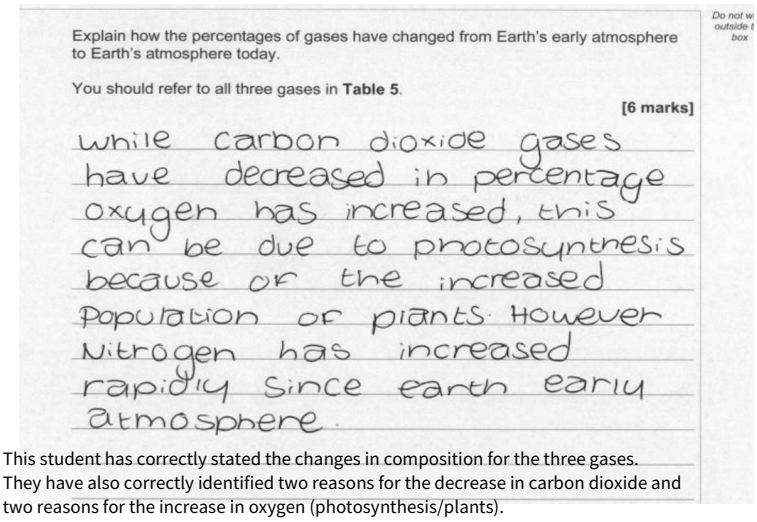
Answer 07 · Examiner comments

June 2025 | 8464/C/2F | Original Q6

Explain how the percentages of gases have changed from Earth's early atmosphere to Earth's atmosphere today.

You should refer to all three gases in **Table 5**.

[6 marks]



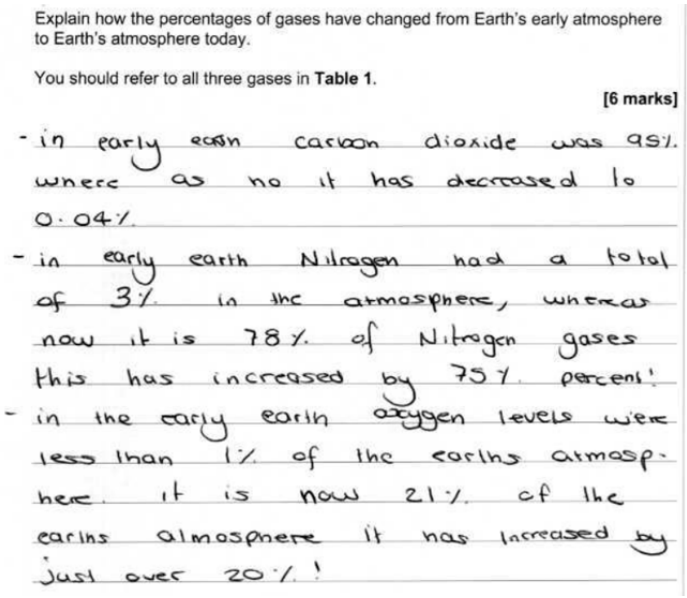
while carbon dioxide gases have decreased in percentage oxygen has increased, this can be due to photosynthesis because of the increased population of plants. However Nitrogen has increased rapidly since earth early atmosphere.

This student has correctly stated the changes in composition for the three gases.
They have also correctly identified two reasons for the decrease in carbon dioxide and two reasons for the increase in oxygen (photosynthesis/plants).
This achieves the lower mark in Level 3.

Explain how the percentages of gases have changed from Earth's early atmosphere to Earth's atmosphere today.

You should refer to all three gases in **Table 1**.

[6 marks]



- in early earth carbon dioxide was 95% where as no it has decreased to 0.04%.
- in early earth Nitrogen had a total of 3% in the atmosphere, whereas now it is 78% of Nitrogen gases this has increased by 75% percent!
- in the early earth oxygen levels were less than 1% of the earths atmosphere. it is now 21% of the earths atmosphere it has increased by just over 20%!

This student has correctly stated the changes in percentages for the three gases, but has not explained any reasons for this. This puts these responses at the upper mark in Level 1.

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5.9.3.2 Properties and effects of atmospheric pollutants

Answer 07 · Examiner comments

June 2025 | 8464/C/2F | Original Q6

06.3 Many students appreciated that cattle farming leads to methane emissions but did not always refer to a reduction in this type of farming being required. There were many responses that answered as an absolute rather than a comparison which was insufficient for the mark. The question was looking for the idea that 'less' farming of livestock or 'less' use of fossil fuels would reduce methane for example, not stopping farming or stopping the use of fossil fuels altogether.

As they were told that methane is a greenhouse gas, some students confused the reduction of methane emissions with that of carbon dioxide and made suggestions such as planting more trees or burying methane underground.

06.4 How sulfur dioxide is released into the atmosphere was not well known, resulting in many blank scripts.
The most common insufficient response for marking point 1 was that 'fuels', rather than 'fossil fuels', were being burnt. Many students referred to the use of cars but did not link this to the burning of fossil fuels.
Students trying to explain the formation of sulfur dioxide often referred to the sulfur reacting with carbon dioxide rather than with oxygen. Very few students gained 2 marks.

06.5 Less than 20% of students could recall any problem associated with sulfur dioxide. There were many vague answers such as its toxic, causing difficulty in breathing, causing cancer, climate change, global warming, harms the environment and burns the skin. None of which gained any credit.
Acid rain was rarely mentioned and the correct terminology of 'respiratory' problems even less so.

0 6 . 5 Give **one** harmful effect of sulfur dioxide emissions.

[1 mark]

Struggle to breathe properly.

The student has tried to offer a creditworthy response but has used incorrect terminology.
The question is looking for 'respiratory issues/problems' as opposed to breathing.
This is a higher demand question and correct terminology is required.

06.6 Students found this question difficult.
A common misconception appeared to be that sulfur itself is used as a fuel and we now do not use it as much.
Some students did attempt to link the reduction in sulfur dioxide to the use of electric vehicles. The common error here however was that they had to clearly imply 'increased' use of electric vehicles, and most did not.

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5.9.3.2 Properties and effects of atmospheric pollutants

Answer 07 · Examiner comments

Contact us

Our friendly team will be happy to support you between 8am and 5pm, Monday to Friday.

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