

Examiners' report

A LEVEL

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

**OCR Level 3 Advanced GCE in
Physical Education**

H555

For first teaching in 2016

H555/01 Summer 2025 series

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Introduction

Our examiners' reports are produced to offer constructive feedback on candidates' performance in the examinations. They provide useful guidance for future candidates.

The reports will include a general commentary on candidates' performance, identify technical aspects examined in the questions and highlight good performance and where performance could be improved. A selection of candidate responses is also provided. The reports will also explain aspects which caused difficulty and why the difficulties arose, whether through a lack of knowledge, poor examination technique, or any other identifiable and explainable reason.

Where overall performance on a question/question part was considered good, with no particular areas to highlight, these questions have not been included in the report.

A full copy of the question paper and the mark scheme can be downloaded from [Teach Cambridge](#).

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Paper 1 series overview

Candidates were generally well prepared and managed their time well. Most candidates were given at least some of the available marks across the full range of topics assessed, particularly when they had taken account of the question command words and the cues in the stems. Many candidates were successful in the anatomy and physiology and exercise physiology questions. The biomechanics topic was less successful for some candidates.

Candidates gave the most successful responses to Questions 1-5, 6 (a), 6 (c) (i), 6 (d), 7 (b) (i), 7 (c), 7 (d) and 8 (c). Candidates gave less successful responses to Questions 6 (b), 6 (c) (ii), 6 (d), 7 (a), 7 (b) (ii) and 8 (d).

Successful responses to Question 9 showed strong knowledge and application of Newton's laws to a sprinter, some accurate knowledge of plyometric training including training guidelines, and well-developed knowledge of a range of training adaptations.

Less successful responses included knowledge of Newton's laws but lacked accurate technical language in the definitions and application. Descriptions of plyometrics training were often limited to brief examples, e.g. bounding and box jumps. Specific training adaptations were often not identified, with responses focussing on increased strength and sprinting speed alone.

Candidates who did well on this paper generally:	Candidates who did less well on this paper generally:
• read and applied the command words of Questions 7 (b) (i), 8 (a) and 8 (c) • used technical terminology when appropriate, including when defining key terms • responded to questions succinctly • applied their knowledge to practical examples in Questions 4, 8 (a) and 8 (b) (ii) • demonstrated good depth of thought and understanding when responding to Questions 6 (a), 6 (b), 7 (a) and 8 (d) • were able to discuss and analyse their ideas to score high marks on AO3 Questions 7 (d) and 9.	• misread or misunderstood the questions - either the command word or other key cues • demonstrated insecure topic knowledge in Questions 5, 6 (b), 7 (c) and 8 (d) • often omitted or confused the technical terminology required to respond to Questions 7(c), 8 (b) (i), 8 (b) (ii) and 8 (c) • did not apply their knowledge to the context given in the Questions 4, 6 (a), 6 (b), 6 (c), 6 (d), 8 (a) and 8 (b) • less successful in responding in sufficient depth or detail when required to evaluate, discuss or analyse for Questions 6 (a), 7 (d) and 9.

Section A overview

This section was successfully responded to by many candidates, particularly Questions 1 and 3b. Less successful responses for Question 2 were limited to 1 mark as there was no connection between contraction of heart chambers and movement of blood. Question 5 caused confusion for many, with air resistance being the most common less successful response.

Question 1 (a) and (b)

1

(a) Which of the following are **both** muscles that contract to cause movement at the ankle?

Put a tick (✓) in the box next to the **one** correct answer.

A Gastrocnemius and adductor longus

☐

B Semitendinosus and soleus

☐

C Soleus and tibialis anterior

☐

D Teres minor and gastrocnemius

☐

[1]

(b) Which of the following are **both** muscles that contract to cause movement at the hip?

Put a tick (✓) in the box next to the **one** correct answer.

A Adductor brevis and iliopsoas

☐

B Gluteus minimus and latissimus dorsi

☐

C Trapezius and gluteus maximus

☐

D Vastus intermedius and pectoralis major

☐

[1]

Most candidates showed good anatomical knowledge and were given marks for both Question 1 (a) and 1 (b).

Question 2

2 The cardiac cycle involves systole and diastole.

Describe systole.

.....

.....

.....

..... [2]

Successful candidates differentiated between atrial systole and ventricular systole and included information about where blood moves to for each of them. Point 1 on the mark scheme was given to many candidates. A few candidates described diastole.

Question 3 (a)

3

(a) Explain the term excess post-exercise oxygen consumption (EPOC) in the recovery process.

.....

..... [1]

Many candidates explained that EPOC is an extra volume/amount of O₂ used in recovery to return the body to pre-exercise state. Some gained the mark (BOD) using terms such as 'needed/required', despite 'consumption' being given in the question. A few candidates were given the OR option on the mark scheme.

Question 3 (b)

(b) State the effect of exercise intensity on EPOC.

.....

..... [1]

Most candidates were given this mark, with many responses stating (BOD) 'using EPOC takes longer'.

Question 4

- 4 One example of a sports injury is torn cartilage, which may be treated using PRICE and will require further medical attention.

Identify **two other** appropriate treatments for torn cartilage.

1

2 [2]

This question was successfully responded to by most candidates with points 1, 2, 4 on the mark scheme commonly given. Errors included 'immobilisation' without stating what with and giving surgery twice (open and keyhole). Many candidates included cold or contrast therapy which was excluded by the question wording, or massage which is not an appropriate treatment for torn cartilage. Some less successful responses included irrelevant SALTAPS and 6R protocols.

Assessment for learning



Candidates should look for **emboldened** terms in the question as these give important advice. In this case '**other**' indicates there are treatments that should be excluded from their responses as they will not be given a mark.

Question 5

- 5 The following statements describe Bernoulli's principle.

Complete the statements by using words from the box below:

air resistance	equal	flight
friction	higher	lower

According to Bernoulli's principle, faster moving fluids have pressure which might create a lift force.

A downwards lift force causes an increase in

[2]

Candidates benefitted from the structure of this question and most responded with two terms from the box. Most candidates successfully selected 'lower' for their first response, but many less successfully responded with 'air resistance' rather than 'friction' for the second part.

Section B overview

Candidates were successful on most of the questions, with many showing the understanding necessary to apply their knowledge in novel ways, such as the evaluation in Question 6 (a), and training effects specific to atherosclerosis in Question 6 (c) (ii).

Many candidates demonstrated good knowledge in the full range of topics in this section, with some very accurate and well-applied responses in Question 8 (biomechanics).

Less successful candidates often misunderstood the demand of a question, or did not have the required knowledge to be given more than 1 mark. This applied most notably to Questions 6 (b), 6 (d), 7 (a) and 8 (d).

Question 6 (a)

6

- (a) Functional characteristics of muscle fibre types include the speed and force of contraction, aerobic and anaerobic capacity, and fatigue resistance.

Evaluate the functional characteristics of slow oxidative muscle fibres for a hockey player.

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

..... [5]

Successful candidates noted the examples of functional characteristics in the question stem and used these to structure their responses effectively. Most of these candidates were able to state the functional characteristics of SO fibres and attempted the evaluation for a hockey player. Speed and force of contraction were common responses. Aerobic capacity and fatigue resistance were less frequently given due to responses not including reference to maintaining quality of performance.

Exemplar 1

Functional characteristics of muscle fibre types include the speed and force of contraction, aerobic and anaerobic capacity, and fatigue resistance.

Evaluate the functional characteristics of slow oxidative muscle fibres for a hockey player.

Slow oxidative fibres have a high aerobic capacity which can allow the hockey player to play for the full 70 minutes. SO fibres also have a high fatigue resistance which allows them to play the game with little fatigue to perform as best as possible. They have a slow speed of contraction which can lead to a low force of contraction which can mean that they are unable to quickly get back and defend a counter attack. Slow oxidative fibres also have a very low anaerobic capacity which means they may struggle for quick bursts of attacking up the pitch.

This response is too vague for 'high aerobic capacity' (mark scheme point 3) because there is no mention of effective performance. However, there is reference to quality of performance to be given point 5 for high fatigue resistance with 'perform as best as possible'. The candidate then achieves points 1 and 2 together (see mark scheme guidance), followed by point 4.

Question 6 (b)

(b) Explain how intrinsic factors regulate heart rate at the start of exercise.

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

..... [4]

The key term 'intrinsic' was less successfully understood by many candidates. Most responses described neural control of heart rate. Nevertheless, due to positive marking candidates were able to be given marks for SA node increased firing rate and increased heart rate.

Responses from candidates who did have knowledge of intrinsic control were mostly given the maximum 4 marks.

Question 6 (c) (i)

(c)

(i) Complete the **three** missing parts of the table to describe the respiratory system for a typical adult at rest.

Key term	Definition	Resting value
Frequency	The number of inspirations or expirations in one minute	
Tidal volume		

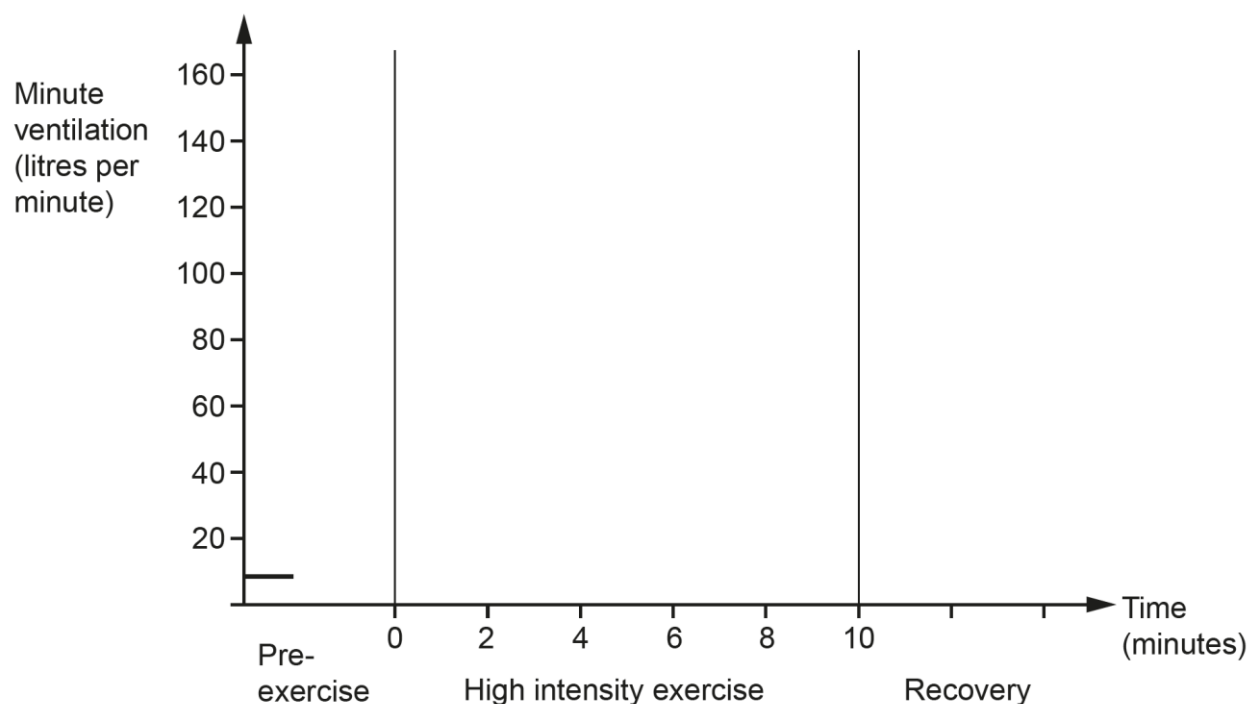
[3]

Common errors on the definition were candidates using oxygen instead of air, and 'inhaled *and* exhaled' and instead of *or*.

Many candidates gave resting values that were a long way out of the acceptable range. 70 was a common value given suggesting they had confused respiratory and cardiac values.

Question 6 (c) (ii)

- (ii) Sketch a line graph to show the effect of pre-exercise, high intensity exercise and recovery on the minute ventilation of a performer. The start of the line is on the graph to show minute ventilation at rest.



[3]

Most candidates took the graph to an appropriate exercise ventilation value of above 100 l/min, with the anticipatory rise scoring a mark for the majority. The high intensity exercise section regularly included a significant plateau which was too vague to be given this mark. Less successful responses showed recovery lines as a single unchanging gradient, initial gradual declines becoming steeper, or a decline to below resting values (sometime to zero).

Question 6 (d)

(d) Describe the short-term physiological effects of performing at high altitude on the cardiovascular system.

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

..... [5]

Candidates who had the appropriate knowledge were able to be given full marks very succinctly, making good use of time.

Many candidates talked about impact of altitude training/adaptations due to acclimatisation and not the short-term responses.

Some less successful responses focused on the effects on the respiratory system rather than the cardiovascular system.

Altitude topic tip

On the H555/01 specification exercise at altitude has two bullet points: effects of altitude and acclimatisation.

The question wording indicates which of these is being examined. In this case 'short-term physiological effects' indicates the first.

Question 7 (a)**7****(a)** Explain **one** benefit and **one** risk of using each of the following nutritional aids:

Creatine

Benefit

.....

.....

Risk

.....

.....

Nitrate

Benefit

.....

.....

Risk

.....

.....

[4]

Many candidates were able to identify benefits and risks of the aids; however, few were able explain them so were not given the marks.

Assessment for learning

Examination technique - help for candidates: An explain command requires candidates to show an understanding of how, or reasons why something is the case. e.g. a reason why increased PC stores are a benefit of creatine.

Question 7 (b) (i)

(b)

(i) Describe the use of the Queen's College step test as a method of evaluating aerobic capacity.

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

..... [4]

Successful candidates were able to describe the QCST protocol accurately and these responses tended to be given full marks from the first 4 or 5 points on the marks scheme. Many candidates less successfully described the test as the maximum number of steps in a minute or stated that the step pace increased through the test.

Few candidates showed knowledge of heart rate recovery being the measure used to predict aerobic capacity.

Several candidates evaluated the QCST instead of describing it.

Question 7 (b) (ii)

(ii) Describe how a goniometer is used to measure knee flexibility.

.....

.....

.....

..... [2]

Candidates generally know what a goniometer is. However, descriptions of its use were often too vague because they did not specify which parts of it were positioned on the joint and which on the articulating bones. Less successful responses also did not state that the angle measured to determine flexibility is of the full range of motion.

Question 7 (c) (i)

(c)

(i) Describe the lifestyle disease known as atherosclerosis.

.....

.....

.....

..... [2]

Many candidates successfully responded to this question well and were given both marks. A common less successful response referred to it being in blood vessels (too vague) or veins (incorrect).

A few candidates confused atherosclerosis with arthritis. This confusion unfortunately prevented them from being given marks for the second part.

Question 7 (c) (ii)

(ii) Outline **three** effects of regular training which might reduce the risk of atherosclerosis.

1

.....

.....

2

.....

.....

3

.....

..... [3]

Some candidates showed excellent understanding of the impact of exercise on cholesterol/LDLs and the benefit of increased HDLs. Good knowledge was also shown of the benefit of reduced blood pressure and effects on arterial wall elasticity.

However, there was a very common misunderstanding that cardiac hypertrophy or increased cardiac output has the effect of removing arterial plaque.

Misconception

It is not the case that increased cardiac hypertrophy/cardiac output/stroke volume/blood flow removes plaque from arterial walls to reduce the risk of atherosclerosis.

Question 7 (d)

(d) Discuss the role of an effective warm up and cool down in the prevention of sports injuries.

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

..... [5]

Many candidates successfully responded to this question, showing a good understanding of effective warm-up (WU) or cool-down (CD) activities and their positive impact on reducing injury risk. Few candidates covered the negative side of the discussion to showed understanding that injury is not prevented by WU or CD.

Less successful responses did not specify the types of injury that may be impacted by WU or distinguish between static and dynamic stretching in the WU.

Question 8 (a)

8

(a) Describe the use of limb kinematics to optimise the performance of a javelin throw.

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

..... [3]

Some candidates were able to describe the positioning of markers to help the performance of the throw to be recorded and /or digitised. Many responses included analysis and subsequent adjustment of the throwing technique to gain 2 marks for points 4 and 6 on the mark scheme, even when no other creditable work was included.

Some candidates did not know what limb kinematics is, and some evaluated rather than described the technology.

Question 8 (b) (i)

(b)

(i) Define angular momentum.

State the formula used to calculate angular momentum.

Definition

.....

Formula

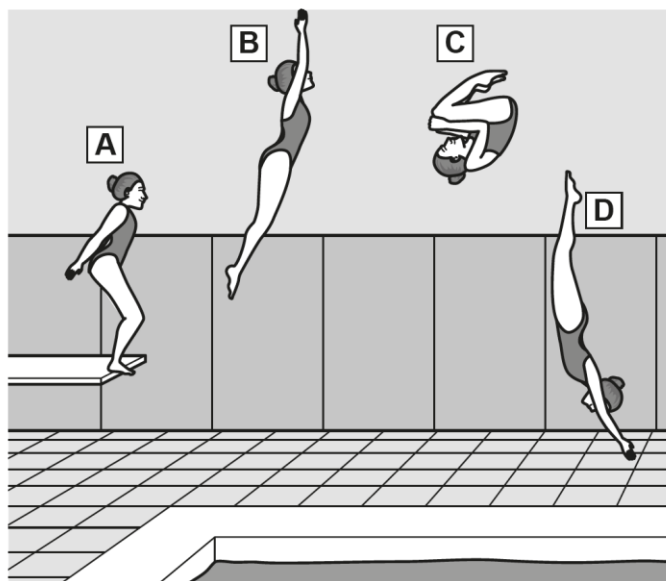
[2]

Many candidates struggled to give an accurate definition of angular momentum. Common errors included definitions of momentum (not angular), angular velocity or angular acceleration, and using the word momentum in the definition rather than motion.

Most candidates correctly wrote the formula, often without knowing the definition.

Question 8 (b) (ii)

(ii) The image shows the performance of a forward somersault dive.



Apply knowledge of conservation of angular momentum to explain how the diver performs this forward somersault dive.

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

..... [5]

Many candidates outlined the principle of conservation of angular momentum, although very few noted that it applies only in flight in this example.

Candidates were successful when they described the changes in body shape linked to moment of inertia (MOI) and/or angular velocity (AV) throughout the phases of the dive. Less successful candidates stated that MOI changes when mass comes closer to/further from the centre of mass which is too vague. Axis of rotation is the correct term.

The most successful responses explained the benefit of increased AV to complete the somersault and decreased AV to control the entry. Few candidates recognised that eccentric forces applied at the take-off/entry create/decrease the angular momentum.

Exemplar 2

Conservation of angular momentum states once angular momentum is created it remains constant unless acted upon by external force.

During take off A to B the diver extends arms upward to increase distribution of mass from axis of rotation, increasing moment of inertia. A decreasing angular velocity so the ~~player~~^{diver} moves up slower higher into the air. Arms and legs from B to C are then tucked in tightly to decrease distribution of mass decrease moment of inertia and increase angular velocity so the diver can rotate to quickly complete the somersault rotation in the flight time. From C to D the diver opens up limbs again stretches out arms to increase moment of inertia and decrease angular velocity ^{reduce rotation} to allow for a more slow, controlled entry into the pool and prevent over rotation occurring.

This response uses descriptions of body shape (extends/tucks/opens up limbs) linked to correct MOI/AV changes for points 2, 5, 7. They fully apply this knowledge to the example of the dive to also gain points 6 and 8 for max 5 marks.

Question 8 (c)

(c) State the force acting against the movement of a body through water.

Explain how **four** different factors affect the size of this force.

Force

Factors

1

.....

.....

2

.....

.....

3

.....

.....

4

.....

.....

[5]

This was a successfully responded to question. Most candidates stated the correct force and were able to explain four factors affecting it.

Less successful responses were 'air resistance' or 'friction'. Positive marking (error carried forward) meant that these candidates could still be given marks for the factors affecting the force (BOD) if otherwise correct.

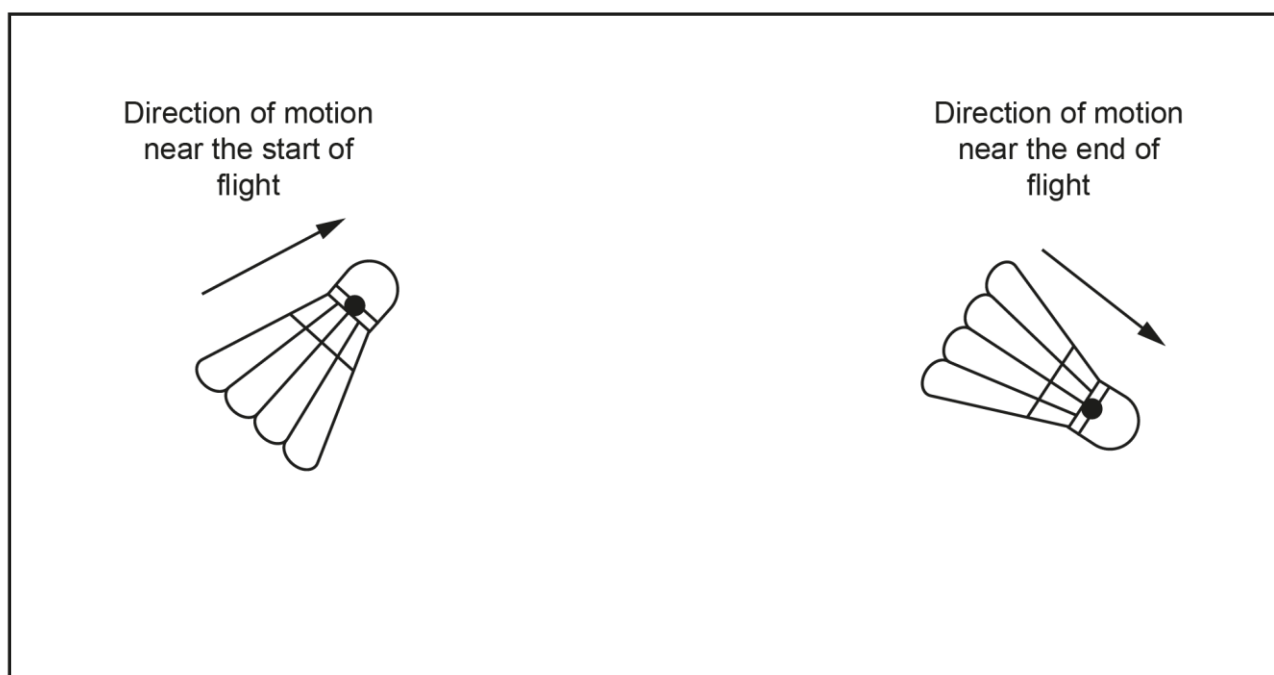
Misconception



Please note that mass is not a factor that *directly* affects the size of a fluid friction force. For this reason, it is not on the specification, and was not on the mark scheme for this question.

Question 8 (d) (i)

- (d)** The images show a hard-hit shuttlecock near the start and end of its flight.
The centre of mass of the shuttlecock is marked with a dot.



- (i)** On each image draw a free body diagram to show the relative sizes of the forces of weight and air resistance acting on the shuttlecock at each stage of its flight. **[2]**

Most candidates were given a mark for the first diagram. Many candidates were not given the second mark because they drew a W arrow longer than in the first diagram. This didn't show knowledge that weight remains the same size (the shuttlecock does not gain mass during flight) and that it is AR that reduces for the relative size of the two forces to change.

Question 8 (d) (ii)

(ii) Explain why the shape of the flight path of the shuttlecock is non-parabolic.

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

..... [3]

Most candidates knew that a non-parabolic flight path occurs when AR is the dominant force, so were given 1 mark. More successful candidates were able to explain that AR slows the shuttlecock down during flight, leading to it becoming less dominant (as AR is affected by velocity).

A few candidates demonstrated a misunderstanding that the non-parabolic flight path was due to the irregular shape/centre of mass not being in the centre of shuttlecock.

Section C overview

Responses were very effectively structured by candidates, who read and decoded the question successfully and were able to demonstrate their level of knowledge, application and analytical where required.

Successful candidates demonstrated good knowledge of the key concepts of Newton's laws, plyometric training included guidelines. A good range of strength training adaptations were identified and analysed. Knowledge was linked effectively to the sprinter throughout their response.

Less successful responses did not include correct terminology for Newton's laws, showed little understanding of plyometrics and adaptations were sometimes not specifically identified. Links to the sprinter were often limited to a repetition of the law, and increases in speed in the adaptations section.

Question 9*

9* Define Newton's laws of motion and apply them to a sprinter in athletics.

Describe plyometrics strength training for a sprinter.

Analyse the physiological adaptations from plyometric strength training that would benefit a sprinter.

Your answer should be limited to:

- Muscle and connective tissue adaptations
- Neural adaptations
- Metabolic adaptations

[20]

Newton Laws applied to the sprinter:

Most candidates had some knowledge of the three laws. The more successful responses used correct technical terminology in their definitions, and some referenced unbalanced forces or forces overcoming inertia within their applications to the sprinter. Many candidates limited their practical application to the sprint start alone. Responses that also applied knowledge of the forces during the race indicated potential L4 for this aspect.

Lower level responses for Newton's laws did not use complete or correct terminology in the definition and repeated similar statements to apply. E.g. (N1) a body will remain still unless a force acts. The sprinter stays still on the block until a force acts. This indicated a lack of understanding about external unbalanced forces.

Plyometrics training:

High level responses included knowledge of the explosive nature of plyometric exercises, with some showing knowledge of eccentric/concentric contractions. Accurate training guidelines for a sprinter were also covered, with many including examples of exercises and reps, sets and recovery details.

Lower level responses did not describe plyometrics except for giving examples of exercises such as bounding or box jumps.

Analysis of adaptations:

Successful candidates gave a good range of adaptations, often from all three categories, and analysed both the effects on physiology and the benefits for a sprinter appropriately.

A common feature of less successful responses was a lack of identified adaptations, but with attempts to describe benefits. E.g sprinter can explode faster out of the blocks, without reference to the adaptations of hypertrophy or muscle fibre recruitment.

Common adaptations given were muscular and connective tissue. Some responses stated increased muscle fibres without specifying size or number, which was too vague.

A common misinterpretation of the neural adaptations was from less successful candidates who wrote extensively about neural control of cardiovascular changes during exercise.

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