Pearson Edexcel

Additional Assessment Materials

Summer 2021

Pearson Edexcel GCE A Level Physics

Topic 14: Gravitational Fields

Test 1

(Public release version)

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Additional Assessment Materials, Summer 2021

General guidance to Additional Assessment Materials for use in 2021

Context

- Additional Assessment Materials are being produced for GCSE, AS and A levels (with the exception of Art and Design).
- The Additional Assessment Materials presented in this booklet are an **optional** part of the range of evidence teachers may use when deciding on a candidate’s grade.
- 2021 Additional Assessment Materials have been drawn from previous examination materials, namely past papers.
- Additional Assessment Materials have come from past papers both published (those materials available publicly) and unpublished (those currently under padlock to our centres) presented in a different format to allow teachers to adapt them for use with candidate.

Purpose

- The purpose of this resource to provide qualification-specific sets/groups of questions covering the knowledge, skills and understanding relevant to this Pearson qualification.
- This document should be used in conjunction with the mapping guidance which will map content and/or skills covered within each set of questions.
- These materials are only intended to support the summer 2021 series.

1

6 In 1990, the Hubble Space Telescope (HST) was launched into a low Earth orbit above the Earth's atmosphere.

(a) HST orbits the Earth in a circular orbit with a speed of $7.59\,km\,s^{-1}$.

mass of Earth = $5.97 \times 10^{24}\,kg$
radius of Earth = $6.37 \times 10^{6}\,m$

(i) Show that the height of HST above the surface of the Earth is about $6 \times 10^{5}\,m$.

(3)

(ii) Calculate the increase in the gravitational potential energy as HST is raised, from its initial position at the Earth's surface, to its orbital height.

mass of HST = 11 600 kg

(2)

Increase in gravitational potential energy = ...

(iii) A student suggests that giving HST more energy than that required in (ii) would result in the satellite orbiting at a greater height and with a greater speed.

Assess the validity of the student's suggestion.

(4)

15 In 2015 the Messenger spacecraft crashed into the surface of the planet Mercury after four years in orbit observing the surface of Mercury.

Messenger's orbit was highly elliptical, varying between 200 km and 15 000 km above the surface of Mercury. Messenger completed one full orbit every 12 hours.

mass of Messenger spacecraft = 565 kg
mass of planet Mercury = 3.30×10^{23} kg
radius of planet Mercury = 2430 km

(a) It has been suggested that the same orbital period of about 12 hours could have been achieved if Messenger was in a circular orbit 7690 km above the surface of Mercury.

(i) Determine whether this suggestion is correct.

(4)

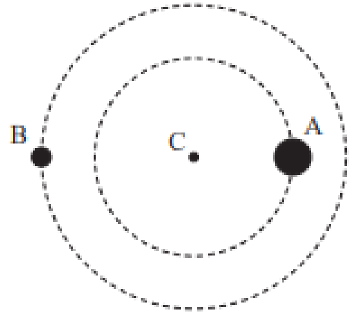
(ii) The elliptical orbit chosen had advantages over this circular orbit.

Explain one advantage.

(2)

12 The diagram shows two black holes, A and B, orbiting each other.

Assume that the centre of mass C of the system is the centre of a circular orbit for each black hole as shown in the diagram.



Black hole A is in an orbit of radius 2.9×10^{10} m and black hole B is in an orbit of radius 3.6×10^{10} m. Both orbit with the same period, so the total distance between them is 6.5×10^{10} m.

(a) Calculate the force between the black holes.

mass of Sun, $M_{\odot} = 1.99 \times 10^{30}$ kg
mass of black hole A = $36M_{\odot}$
mass of black hole B = $29M_{\odot}$

(2)

Force = ...

(b) By considering the orbit of one black hole about C, determine the period of the orbit.

(3)

Period = ...

(Total for Question 12 = 5 marks)

16 Astronauts on the 1971 Apollo 14 mission to the Moon brought back many rock samples. It is now believed that one of these contains a piece of rock that originated on Earth about 4 billion years (4×10^9 years) ago.

The piece of rock is believed to have been launched into space when an asteroid struck the Earth.

(b) The gravitational potential between the Earth and the Moon due to the combined effect of their gravitational fields increases to a maximum value of $-1.28\,\text{MJ}\,\text{kg}^{-1}$ at a point between them.

Calculate the minimum speed at which a rock would have to leave the Earth in order to reach the Moon.

In your calculation, you may assume the rock has zero kinetic energy when it has maximum potential energy.

mass of Earth = $5.97 \times 10^{24}\,\text{kg}$
radius of Earth = 6370 km

(4)

Minimum speed = ...

TOTAL FOR PAPER IS 27 MARKS